the American Scholar

WINTER 1997

$6.95 / $9.00 Canada

The Kevorkian Epidemic
PAUL R. McHUGH

The Merely Very Good
JEREMY BERNSTEIN

B. H. Haggin
WILLIAM YOUNGREN

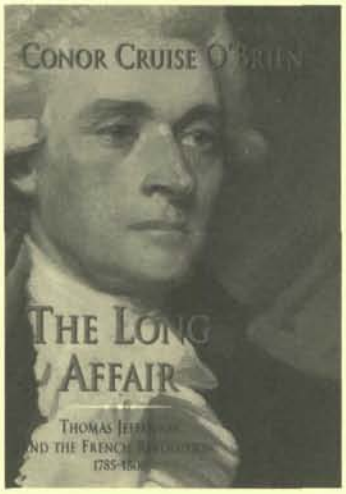
Who Was Leo Strauss?
GREGORY BRUCE SMITH

The Road to Timbuktu
WILLIAM ZINSSER

The River and the Road
CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK

When Did Modern Science Begin?
EDWARD GRANT

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



The Long Affair

THOMAS JEFFERSON AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, 1785-1800

Conor Cruise O'Brien

"In O'Brien's view, Jefferson was far from the intrepid egalitarian he's been made out to be. . . . In O'Brien's opinion, it's time that Americans face the fact that Jefferson, long seen as a champion of the 'wronged masses,' was a racist who should not be placed on a pedestal in an increasingly multicultural United States."—*Boston Phoenix*

Cloth $29.95 360 pages

Goethe and His Publishers

Siegfried Unseld

Translated by Kenneth J. Northcott

"An urbane, engaging exploration of the great poet's career in letters by Germany's foremost literary publisher. . . . Simultaneously learned and personal, informative and entertaining, thoughtful and judicious. . . . It sparkles with lively digressions on Goethe's loves, his politics, his friends, his tics and foibles. . . . A literary biography that uses the author and his publishers as a kind of point of orientation."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

Cloth $24.95 392 pages

NOW IN PAPER

The Essential Holmes

SELECTIONS FROM THE LETTERS, SPEECHES, JUDICIAL OPINIONS, AND OTHER WRITINGS OF OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, JR.

Edited and with an Introduction by Richard A. Posner

"Brilliantly edited, lucidly organized, and equipped with a compelling introduction by Judge Posner, [this book] is one of the finest single-volume samplers of any author's work I have seen."—Terry Teachout, *National Review*

Paper $15.95 374 pages

Socrates and Aristophanes

Leo Strauss

"Strauss gives us an impressive addition to his life's work—the recovery of the Great Tradition in political philosophy."
—Stanley Parry, *National Review*

Paper $15.95 332 pages

Spinoza's Critique of Religion

Leo Strauss

"A substantial contribution to the thinking of all those interested in the ageless problems of faith, revelation, and reason."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

Paper $15.95 334 pages

The University of Chicago Press

5801 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637

Visit us at http://www.press.uchicago.edu

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Can't get to Brown to study Literature?

Art seduces. And who is a better cupid for the literary romance than a professor who loves what he does...

Professor Arnold Weinstein, Edna and Richard Salomon Distinguished Professor, recently received the Brown University award as the Best Teacher in the Humanities. His course is part of The Teaching Company's SuperStar Teachers series. This series brings America's premiere college lecture professors, those rated highest by students, to anyone who values the sheer joy of learning. And Professor Weinstein is what we all have in mind when we think of such a teacher.

In his course *Understanding Literature and Life: Drama, Poetry and Narrative*, he shares his passion. By explaining in simple terms the various complex ideas that underlie major canonical texts, he draws us into the romance, serving as a conduit to the riches of a literary life.

To him, art is not for just the few: the rich and learned. It isn't an accessory to everyday life. Art is for everybody, and it is essential.

This course is an introduction to the major texts of Western culture, from antiquity to the present, with special emphasis on the uniqueness of literary language, the formal and generic conventions of literary production, the position that literature occupies as a site for historical and ideological forces and conflicts, and finally the continuing human significance of the great works of the past and the present.

All too often, people feel either locked out of the Great Books, unequipped to savor their richness, or else they feel that great literature has only some antiquarian or museum value. One purpose of this course is to empower readers to make their entry into the works of the past an exciting and gratifying experience that widens one's optic on self and society in unpredictable and enduring ways.

This course is designed to exhibit not only the themes and techniques of great literature, but also to expose the power and limitations of different analytic tools in assisting our understanding of these monuments of the human spirit.

Professor Weinstein's series examines the three great forms of literary expression in a chronological fashion: drama, poetry, and narrative. Each part consists of twenty 30-minute lecures available on audio or video tape.

Let Professor Weinstein teach you at home.

Part I: Drama

Course No. 211 Video ($159.95 + $10 s&h) or Audio ($129.95 + $10 s&h)

Our series on drama begins with the pre-eminent text of Western culture, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, and it continues through Shakespeare and Molière, on to the realist and naturalist work of the 19th century, to close with Beckett's *Waiting for Godot.*

Part II: Poetry

Course No. 212 Video ($159.95 + $10 s&h) or Audio ($129.95 + $10 s&h)

From Shakespeare's Sonnets through the great Romantic poets Blake and Whitman, including the iconoclastic visions of Dickinson, and moving into our own century with Frost, Stevens and Adrienne Rich, we see what a bristling human document the poem can be, how it offers a unique portrait of private psyche and public setting.

Part III: Narrative

Course No. 213 Video ($159.95 + $10 s&h) or Audio ($129.95 + $10 s&h)

Narrative is doubtless the most familiar form of literary expression, since everyone reads, or used to read, novels. Our optic here is long-range, since we begin with a medieval Arthurian romance and we close with Alice Walker's *The Color Purple.*

"No Risk" Money-Back Guarantee!

Praise for SuperStar Teachers Courses

"I love these courses. All of them have exceeded my expectations."
—Deedie Rose, Dallas, TX

"Missed College? Hit Rewind."
—The New York Times

AUDIO ON SALE! $100 OFF ENTIRE COURSE

To order, mail coupon below or call our toll-free number: (Refer to offer code 4121)
1-800-TEACH-12 (1-800-832-2412) Fax: 1-703-912-7756

The Teaching Company®
7405 Alban Station Ct., Suite A107
Springfield, VA 22150-2318
Offer Code 4121

Please send me the following Parts from ***Understanding Literature and Life*** each consisting of 20-24, 30-minute lectures on audio or video cassettes.

☐ Entire Course

☐ Part I ☐ Part II ☐ Part III

(please check desired format)

SALE ☐ Audio*: Entire course, $199.95 (reg. price $299.95) plus $20 S&H. One part, $129.95 plus $10 ea. S&H.

☐ Video*: Entire course, $399.95 plus $20 S&H. One part, $159.95 plus $10 ea. S&H.

*Note: Virginia residents please add 4.5% sales tax.

☐ Check or Money Order enclosed
☐ VISA ☐ MC ☐ AMEX ☐ Disc.

Account Number

Signature Exp. Date

Name (please print)

Mailing Address

City/State/Zip

Phone *(If we have questions regarding your order)*

☐ **FREE CATALOG. Please send me a free copy of your complete catalog of over 60 courses (no purchase necessary).**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE

BRADLEY

FACULTY FELLOWSHIPS

SUMMER 1997 JUNE 15 - AUGUST 7

The St. John's College Graduate Institute is now offering partial fellowships to attend summer sessions in Santa Fe. To be eligible, faculty members must be sponsored by their institution.

Study at the Graduate Institute provides college faculty with an opportunity to explore and discuss issues raised by the great works of Western civilization.

The fellowships will be of particular interest to faculty and institutions engaged in curricular reform and the revitalization of liberal arts education.

St. John's is an independent, non-denominational college.

For information contact:
ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE
The Graduate Institute-A
1160 Camino Cruz Blanca
Santa Fe, NM 87501-4599 505 984-6083

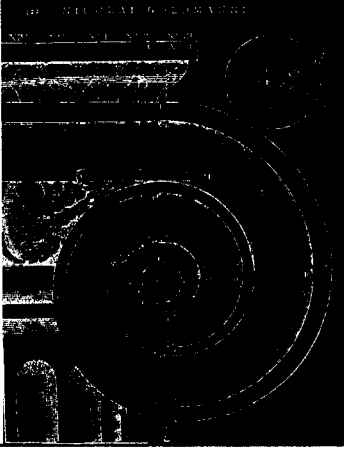
THE GRADUATE INSTITUTE IN LIBERAL EDUCATION

"The truth is, St. John's College, with campuses in Maryland & New Mexico, is perhaps the most intellectual college in the entire country."

—The Fiske Guide To Colleges

A program of study in:

Literature
Politics and Society
Mathematics and Natural Science
Philosophy and Theology
History



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the American Scholar

Published for
General Circulation
by
PHI BETA KAPPA

EDITORIAL BOARD

PETER BROWN
JOEL E. COHEN
WM. THEODORE DE BARY
RENÉE C. FOX
JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN
VARTAN GREGORIAN

WERNER GUNDERSHEIMER
NEIL HARRIS
PAUL MCHUGH
JUDITH MARTIN
EDWARD ROTHSTEIN
EUGEN WEBER

JOSEPH EPSTEIN, *Editor*
CHARLES BLITZER, *Consulting Editor*
JEAN STIPICEVIC, *Managing Editor*
SANDRA COSTICH, *Associate Editor*
EDNA NWABUFO, *Subscription Manager*
LYNETTE EDWARDS, *Subscription Assistant*

Advertising Representative: CLAIRE ISELI, 2108 Kingshouse Road, Silver Spring, Maryland 20905. Telephone: 301-384-2440. *U.S.A. Newsstand Distribution:* EASTERN NEWS DISTRIBUTORS, INC., 250 West 55th Street, New York, New York 10019.

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR® (ISSN 0003-0937), published quarterly since 1932 by the Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. For subscription information call 202-265-3808. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1996 by the Phi Beta Kappa Society. Printed in the U.S.A.

POSTMASTER: Send all change of address notices, undeliverable copies, subscription orders, and other mail to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Subscription rates: for individuals, $25.00 one year, $48.00 two years, $69.00 three years, $6.95 a copy; for institutions, $30.00 one year, $58.00 two years, $84.00 three years, $8.00 a copy; foreign and Canadian, $3.00 a year additional for postage.

Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by return postage. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury. The opinions expressed in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR are those of the author of each article and not necessarily those of the Editor, the Editorial Board, or the officers of the Phi Beta Kappa Society.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW FROM CALIFORNIA

THE WARS WE TOOK TO VIETNAM

Cultural Conflict and Storytelling

MILTON J. BATES

"An absolutely stunning achievement. Bates presents an incisively accurate analysis of the attitudes that shaped and controlled Americans' perceptions during the 1960s and '70s. He fuses literary analysis with historical scholarship to offer a comprehensive study of American thought and writing before, during, and after the war years." —John Clark Pratt, author of *The Laotian Fragments*

$50.00 cloth, $18.95 paper

AMERICAN LITERARY REALISM AND THE FAILED PROMISE OF CONTRACT

BROOK THOMAS

"A masterful and authoritative account of the intricate relations between literature and law in later 19th-century America. . . . Thomas casts a richly illuminating as well as searching light on the symbiosis of literary and legal thinking in the period, and thereby manages to construct what is potentially a different narrative configuration of later 19th-century intellectual and cultural history."—Giles Gunn, author of *Thinking across the American Grain*

$35.00 cloth

At bookstores or order 1-800-822-6657.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

NEW IN PAPERBACK—

I'VE GOT THE LIGHT OF FREEDOM

The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle

CHARLES M. PAYNE

"A superb and important book, remarkably astute in its judgments and strikingly sophisticated in its analyses. Impressively original, it is one of the most significant studies of the Black freedom struggle yet published."—David J. Garrow, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Bearing the Cross*

A *Choice* Outstanding Academic Book of the Year; winner, Lillian Smith Book Award, McLemore Prize of the Mississippi Historical Association; Co-recipient of the Bruno Brand Tolerance Book Award; *A Centennial Book,* $16.95 paper, illustrated

LETTERS OF WALLACE STEVENS

Edited by HOLLY STEVENS

With a New Foreword by Richard Howard

"The music is in the poems, but the letters are their own literature of a uniquely imaginative life."—*Christian Science Monitor*

$24.95 paper, illustrated

EMERSON

The Mind on Fire

ROBERT D. RICHARDSON JR.

Frontispiece by Barry Moser

New in paper—"The Emerson who emerges in these pages is alive to his fingertips, blazing with the God within, the divine spark that kindles the world to life in consciousness each day."

—*Times Literary Supplement*

New York Times Book Review Notable Book; Nominee, National Book Critics Circle Award, Winship/PEN New England Award; Winner, Francis Parkman Prize, Melcher Book Award; A Centennial Book, $16.95 paper, illustrated

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTENTS

What's in It for the Talent?
Aristides 7

The Kevorkian Epidemic
Paul R. McHugh 15

The Merely Very Good
Jeremy Bernstein 31

The River and the Road: Fashions in Forgiveness
Clara Claiborne Park 43

Haggin
William Youngren 63

Who Was Leo Strauss?
Gregory Bruce Smith 95

When Did Modern Science Begin?
Edward Grant 105

The Road to Timbuktu: Why I Travel
William Zinsser 117

Parents vs. State
William Petersen 121

POETRY

December Days, *Michael Blumenthal* 28
Requiem for Judith Resnick, *Davi Walders* 29
Liberty Print, *A. V. Christie* 40
Last Love, *Michael Miller* 94
I've Cultivated a Nostalgia, *Scott Coffel* 113
Remembering Odessa, *Judith Harris* 114
The Jilted Clairvoyant, *Neal Bowers* 116
Rondeau: Old Woman with Cat, *Marilyn Taylor* 120

BOOKS

Voyage to Greeneland
Ann M. Begley 128

Reviews
Morris Freedman, Charles L. Griswold, Jr., Evelyn Toynton, Robin Bates, Robert B. Heilman, Jonathan Elukin, Ruth Gay 135

THE READER REPLIES 158

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fevered Lives

Tuberculosis in American Culture since 1870

KATHERINE OTT

Consider two polar images of the same medical condition: the pale and fragile Camille daintily coughing a small spot of blood onto her white lace pillow, and a man in a Bowery flophouse spreading a dread and deadly infection. Katherine Ott chronicles how in one century a romantic, ambiguous affliction of the spirit was transformed into a disease that threatened public health and civic order. Emphasizing the material culture of the disease—medical supplies, advertisements for faraway rest cures, and invalid hammocks—*Fevered Lives* underscores the shifting meanings of disease in an extraordinarily readable cultural history.

50 halftones • $27.95 cloth

Tate Gallery Archive, Vanessa Bell Photographic Collection

On or About December 1910

Early Bloomsbury and Its Intimate World

PETER STANSKY

"Did England stagger into modernity in 1910? Few better to consider the question than Peter Stansky, a veteran connoisseur of the group." —NOEL ANNAN

"Tantalizing. A very interesting book, written with clarity and an eye for detail." —FRANCES SPALDING

Studies in Cultural History • 13 halftones • $27.95 cloth

British Military Spectacle

From the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimea

SCOTT HUGHES MYERLY

"No other book has tried to look at how military dress and mannerism interacted with details of civil society like the circus! The energy of research behind this book is impressive. Myerly has read very widely... The theme he addresses is a real one: military show did matter in British life, and affected soldiers and civilians alike." —WILLIAM H. McNEILL

16 color illus., 16 halftones • $35.00 cloth

Florence

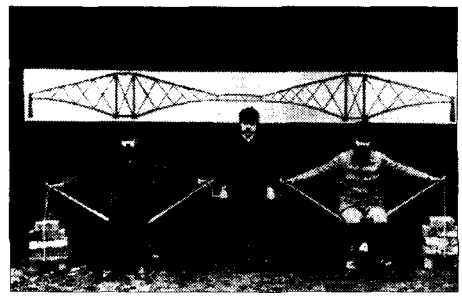
A Portrait

MICHAEL LEVEY

"It would be a brave person to offer yet another interpretation [of Florence], but few could be better qualified to do so than Michael Levey. As a distinguished art historian and former Director of the National Gallery, he has the right sort of familiarity with Florentine art to lend authority to his observations; as an amateur musicologist and novelist, he is certainly aware of broader cultural issues and has an eye for the telling vignette that brings his subject to life. Enthusiastically hybrid, his *Florence: A Portrait* is both a guide, history and personal appreciation of [Florence]."

—Bruce Boucher, TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

50 color illus., 100 halftones • $35.00 cloth



Invention by Design

How Engineers Get from Thought to Thing

HENRY PETROSKI

Engineering entails more than knowing how things work. What do economics and ecology, aesthetics and ethics, have to do with the shape of a paper clip, the tab of a beverage can, the cabin design of a turbojet, or the course of a river? How do the idiosyncrasies of individual engineers, companies, and communities leave their mark on projects such as Velcro®, fax machines, and waterworks? *Invention by Design* offers an insider's look at these political and cultural dimensions of design, development, and production, and reaffirms Petroski as the master explicator of the principles and processes that turn thoughts into the many things that define our material world.

31 halftones, 63 line illus. • $24.95 cloth

At bookstores or from

Harvard University Press

800 448 2242

http://www.hup.harvard.edu

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What's in It for the Talent?

ARISTIDES

Of the various kinds of snob I undoubtedly am, it is as a talent snob that I wish above all to be known and, I hope, remembered. People who have real ability, who can do dashingly what most people cannot do at all, have my number. The kinds of talent I am able to appreciate are not merely varied but appallingly varied. I love Vermeer and Blossom Dearie, Sugar Ray Robinson and Max Beerbohm, and with very little strain I could come up with much wilder juxtapositions. Talent—the real, the vital, the magical thing—turns me soft and atwitter. I sometimes lapse into thinking that talent is all that matters in the world, even though I know that there are many things—decency, loyalty, courage, good-heartedness—that matter much more. But then, of course, the over-valuing of talent is what makes me a talent snob in the first place.

Talent is a not a word that the dictionaries have served very well. Its origin seems to be in the ancient unit in which precious metals were measured. In most definitions, natural endowments are mentioned; so, too, special aptitudes; and sometimes—getting closer to the nub of the matter—the word *gift* comes into play. The fourteenth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which devotes an article to genius, says of talent only that it "refers to a native aptitude for some special kind of work [and] implies the relatively quick and easy acquisition of a particular skill." Valéry, who said so many striking things, also said that we really need a word to cover the stretch that lies between talent and genius. Much as I like the ring of that, I find it a touch confusing because, though the one term is usually defined with reference to the other—with genius always given the higher place—neither has ever been properly locked up semantically.

My natural inclination is to prefer talent to genius. Genius is, as the English say, a bit of a muchness or, as we Americans say, too much. Geniuses have generally been more than a little sloppy. Aristotle claimed that "there is no great genius without a mixture of madness," and there is a good deal to it. Think of Picasso with his Communism, woman chasing, multiple small stupidities; Einstein, with his political naïveté, silly hair, many minor cruelties; Shaw with his wish to reform English spelling, his utter vanity, his vegetarianism (imagine what the SOB would have been like had he eaten meat). Genius is so all-embracing, so all-round, yet I find I rarely wish to embrace it, let alone walk all the way round it.

I may have acquired this mild antipathy to genius from Max Beerbohm, who seems never to have met a genius he didn't dislike. (His distaste for George Bernard Shaw was considerable.) He wrote a brilliant little essay, "A Clergyman," that comes to the defense of an unknown cleric bullied, in the pages of Boswell's biography, by Dr. Johnson. When Max met W. B. Yeats, he felt that "the pleasure of meeting Yeats was not for me an unmixed one. I felt always rather uncomfortable, as though I had submitted myself to a mesmerist who somehow didn't mesmerise me." Yeats, in time, became his genius—that is, someone slightly other than himself. "His dignity and charm were as they had always been," writes Max. "But I found it less easy to draw caricatures of him. He seemed to have become subtly less like himself." The genius, I gather, had taken over, leaving the man behind.

Even Goethe, that universal genius of all geniuses, is not exempt from these Beerbohmian criticisms. In his essay "Quia Imperfectum," Max notes that Goethe has often

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been described as "the perfect man" and was "a personage on the great scale, in the grand manner, gloriously balanced, rounded"—"from no angle, as he went his long way, could it be plausibly hinted that he wasn't sublime." One waits, after such a buildup from the always measured Max, for the blade to fall, and now it does: "But a man whose career was glorious without intermission, decade after decade, does sorely try our patience."

Max goes on to show, through describing a minor incident in which Goethe was trapped into having his portrait painted by a failed German artist named Tischbein, the great genius's vanity, naïveté, conceit. "Deep thinking and high imagining [such as geniuses go in for] blunt that trivial instinct by which you and I size people up," Max writes, and that, before he is done, ain't the half of it. The essay is ostensibly about Tischbein's failure to complete his portrait of Goethe. Max speculates that Tischbein may have abandoned him to court the beautiful future wife of the English ambassador to Naples. But "a likelier explanation is merely that Goethe . . . irked him." By the essay's end, Goethe comes out rather resembling that part of the horse that jumps the fence last.

The only modern genius whom I admire is Winston Churchill, and I wonder if this isn't so because, along with being a political genius, he was also an immensely talented man: an excellent writer, a brilliant talker, a not-half-bad painter. Churchill got so many things done, in different lines and fields. I also prefer my geniuses to die young, à la Mozart, Schubert, and Keats, and not stick around to grow as egomaniacal as Wagner, as grotesque as Ezra Pound, as mean as Robert Frost, or as bombastic as Frank Lloyd Wright.

I have met a small number of Nobel Prize winners, three or four men of astonishing erudition, and a few brilliant scientists of the first rank, but I've never met a true genius. A genius is someone who changes one's very conception of the possible, whose originality is such as to take him outside the traveled paths, there to create or explore things the world would probably not have come upon without him, or at least not as quickly. "What, indeed, is genius," asked Walter de la Mare, writing about Joseph Conrad, "but a power of receptiveness so individual that its revelation in the form of art is the revelation of a new universe."

A real distinction ought to be made between scientific and literary genius. The scientific geniuses, from Newton on, form a chain of sorts, one link building on the one before it; while literary genius—Dickens, Tolstoy, Joyce, Proust—is a one-shot deal, coming out of nowhere and often not leading to anything beyond itself. But perhaps you can sense me swimming out of my depth here, so I had better head back to shore.

I, who for most of my youth worried about my lack of talent, even now show a certain effrontery in talking about genius. Although I grew up Jewish and middle-class—in an atmosphere where people, stereotypically, worship cultural talent of all sorts—only two kinds of talent were really appreciated in my neighborhood: athletic talent among the young and the ability to earn a good living among our parents. (All those Jewish boys, and not a violin in sight—what a waste!) General intelligence, taste, and good manners seemed to count for little. In any case, I, as a boy, hadn't any of these talents or qualities in proportions significant enough to matter.

Small skills counted for less, but, I suppose, they did count for something. A nice handwriting, a quick mathematical mind, a knack for drawing, an ability to sing on key, none of these would have changed my life—yet the fact is that I hadn't any of them. If someone had asked me, when I was fourteen, what I was good at, I would have had to have thought a good bit, and then the best I could have come up with might have been paddle and racquet sports and gin rummy. I didn't feel my want of any large, or even minor, talent as crushing, though I suspect it would have given me a boost to have been able to do something with rather more facility than most other people. My averageness—my talentlessness, really—didn't exactly get me down, but neither did it set me up.

Apart from paddle and racquet games and gin rummy, I did have a small, most incipient talent for mimicry and for using words. The two were connected. Witty responses frequently occurred to me; an amused sense of the grotesque and of the comedy of pretension fortified me as I looked out at the world. My imitative powers allowed me to mimic the speech of friends and celebrities with some accuracy. Certain words fascinated me—*malodorous, reiterate, deliquescent*—and, when used

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in proper rhythm, they positively excited me. This excitement was evidence of an innate interest in writing, though I had no way of knowing it then, for I knew no writers and hadn't even remotely considered the possibility of making my living as a writer.

In fact, I knew almost no grammar and even less punctuation. But my imitative powers, once I went off to the University of Illinois, allowed me to write passable if less-than-Gibbonian compositions. I should probably have been asked to write no compositions at all had I studied business, as most of my friends did. And I would indubitably have studied—"majored in"—business but for my utter certainty that I would have failed accounting. I saw those drab textbooks, I looked upon those accounting worksheets, and I knew straightaway that I hadn't a chance—one semester of accounting and I would be a goner.

The first time in my life that I ever heard the words *liberal arts* was in connection with my fleeing the study of business. Studying the liberal arts was, I discovered, an alternative to studying business. (There was engineering, but, with my mathematical powers, it was out of the question.) The liberal arts have meant a great many things to a great many people, but to me they meant an escape from accounting. Like most of the fateful decisions in my life, the decision to study the arts came about all but by accident.

The liberal arts curriculum at the University of Chicago required a sustained immersion in reading and a fair amount of writing. For the better part of my undergraduate education, I wrote defensively—that is, in fear of making some rudimentary mistake. I was never so foolhardy as to attempt a sentence with a semicolon in it. As for the dash—the insignia of the ironist and long since my favorite punctuation mark—it hadn't, as far as I knew, been invented.

Sometime around my last year at Chicago, things began to click into place. I began to read the intellectual magazines, which were refreshing after an unrelieved diet of Great Books. I began to read more attentively, always with an eye out for what I could steal for my own writing; I began to realize, too, that my writing had greater fluency when it imitated my speech. If I could be faintly clever in conversation, then why not in writing? Yes, why the hell not?

Friends tell me that letters I wrote in my early twenties read very much like my writing of today. I had, apparently, a characteristic note, a voice, a—could it actually be?—style. For the first time in my life I began to wonder whether I might have the magical thing itself, talent, or at least a touch of it. "This is what we mean by talent—by having something fresh to contribute," wrote Henry James, about the Goncourt Brothers. Did I have something fresh to contribute? I couldn't have answered that question.

What I did have was an almost preposterously ardent desire to be a writer. Please understand, I was in pursuit of neither truth nor beauty. What I wanted was print, my words in print, my name in print. The day that I learned, sometime in my twenty-second year, that I had an article accepted by a magazine was among the happiest of my life, up there with weddings and the birth of children. Edith Wharton, when she first learned of the acceptance of her poems by a magazine, ran up and down the stairs of her house to work off her excitement. I, less exuberantly, carried my letter of acceptance folded in my shirt pocket, and every chance I got I ducked away from my job and into the bathroom to re-read it.

Whence does such desire derive? Why does it visit only certain people? The answers to these questions have become no clearer to me over the years. They are, moreover, questions that pose themselves to me with some insistence because for more than two decades I've taught a fairly large contingent of would-be writers. Many of these kids have demonstrated talent well beyond what mine was at their age. Some among them have written things that seem to me close to being publishable; and a few have gone on to publish reviews or essays or longish newspaper pieces; three or four have drifted into jobs in journalism. But in all the time that I've been teaching, none has established him- or herself as a full-time, full-blown writer, despite immensely impressive youthful talent. None has yet proven that he or she has "something fresh to contribute."

My own belief is that the element of desire has not been sufficiently strong in them. I have had to conclude that they have not wanted it badly enough. By *it* I mean the desire for mastery through sustained practice of the craft of writing. Part of the problem may be that they enjoy life—its everyday pleasures,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

diversions, and attachments—too much. "Only a monomaniac gets anything done," said Einstein, to which one might add that only monomania will suffice to bring talent to fruition. The need for relentless work comes up again and again among the great achievers in art. "Inspiration is merely the reward for working hard every day," wrote Maurice Ravel, who also told the young composer Manuel Rosenthal: "You must work very hard, because someone who is gifted has to work harder than someone who is not." Henry James averred: "I have sweated blood to give an amusing surface to my style." James, not yet thirty years old, also wrote to Charles Eliot Norton: "I have in my own fashion learned the lesson that life is effort, unremittingly repeated, and . . . I feel somehow as if real pity were for those who had been beguiled into the perilous delusion that it isn't."

In his notebooks, Gerald Brenan writes: "In the old Provençal or Limousin language talent (*talens, talans, talanz*) meant desire, longing, inclination. In Dante *talento* means lust. The change in the meaning of the word suggests that it is the strong desire that creates the ability to do so." The other side of the lust for using one's talent is the disappointment, self-loathing, actual depression that visits when one is not using one's talent. I first realized that I was really a writer when I became almost physically ill after letting too long a time lapse without doing any writing.

Something close to a full literature exists on the subject of the destruction of talent. Legions have been accused of abusing, misusing, or selling out their talent. Others have almost specialized in wasting their talent. Harold Acton wrote: "I have made mistakes and wasted my talents, but I looked upon my failures as stepping stones toward the more beautiful and the most beautiful." F. Scott Fitzgerald always worried about whether he wrecked his talent by writing for money, first turning out slick-magazine stories, then taking himself off to Hollywood, where he was a great bust. When I was young, merely to be employed by Henry Luce on any of his Time-Life magazines was to have been thought of—and to have been allowed the dramatic self-importance of thinking of oneself—as having sold out one's talent. Edmund Wilson claimed that Luce and Hollywood were the two great destroyers of talent in his day.

Even someone who seemed so effortlessly talented as W. H. Auden worried a good bit about misusing his talent. "He was almost in awe of his own gifts," Auden's friend Thekla Clark has written, and "constantly afraid of not using them properly." She recounts Auden telling her that, during his political years, raising money for refugees in the Spanish civil war by boisterous speechifying, he "felt just covered with dirt afterwards." He worried about being proud, about not doing his best even in quite trivial matters. For Auden, not in dreams but in talent began responsibility.

Perhaps the most renowned talent waster of the current century was Cyril Connolly, who all but cultivated failure the way other Englishmen cultivated dahlias. Connolly discovered enemies of promise everywhere and may in fact have invented a few on his own. Of Connolly, Edmund Wilson, a man who did get the most out of his talent, wrote:

> Cyril Connolly
> Behaves rather fonnily:
> Whether folks are at peace or fighting,
> He complains that it keeps him from writing.

I say that Wilson got the most out of his talent—he was an indefatigable worker—but his was not quite the talent he wanted. Clearly, being the most pervasive and in some ways the most influential critic of his generation was not good enough for Wilson. He also wished to write fiction; but he couldn't make his characters come alive. Dawn Powell once devastatingly wrote of Wilson that "what he does not understand is all life that is not in print."

To know one's own strengths—and limitations—is another lesson that the talented are at some point forced to learn. It may well be that through understanding his limitations a person defines his talent. Max Beerbohm, with his perfect perspective on himself, wrote to a man who first proposed to write a biography of him: "My gifts are small. I've used them very well and discreetly, never straining them; and the result is that I've made a charming little reputation."

Somerset Maugham, who was very smart about all things having to do with literary production, had a keen sense of his own talent and its limitations. "Genius," he wrote to his friend the painter Gerald Kelly, "is a combination of talent and character, but character to a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

certain extent—I do not know how much, but I believe enormously—can be acquired." Maugham's view of his own artistic resources was that he had more character than brains and more brains than talent. He felt he could not acquire an ornate or interesting vocabulary, and he had no real powers of metaphor making. "I knew that I should never write as well as I could wish, but I thought with pains I could arrive at writing as well as my natural defects allowed. On taking thought it seemed to me that I must aim at lucidity, simplicity and euphony."

Maugham's acknowledgment of his having no talent for making metaphors is corroborated by Aristotle's belief, set out in the *Rhetoric*, that the making of metaphors is apparently a natural gift and one that cannot be learned. Which brings me to the question of natural and developed talent. "There are two kinds of talent," Pearl Bailey said, "man-made talent and God-given talent. With man-made talent you have to work very hard. With God-given talent, you just touch it up once in a while." Interesting if true, but is it?

Most God-given talent, with the exception of musical and mathematical talent, seems to be physical: the talent for singing, for dancing, for running and throwing and other athletic feats. These, of course, need more than the occasional touching up that Miss Bailey suggests, but one of the nice things about them is that they tend to show up early. If one decides on a career in music or athletics, one can generally make that decision based on reasonable evidence and hence predict a reasonable probability of success. As a teacher of would-be writers, I envy teachers of music, who can know early the quality of the talent with which they are dealing and thus avoid leading on students who are certain to experience heartbreak. In writing, especially given the number of impressive late-starting careers—Joseph Conrad's being only the most magnificent—talent has a way of showing up in one's thirties and even beyond. The problem, of course, occurs when, like Godot, it doesn't show up at all. Lucky, in my view, are the parents whose children have no interest in becoming artists.

That is a sentiment to which Noël Coward's mother would never have subscribed. Violet Coward was a stage mother, but of a decent sort; besides, her son didn't require much in the way of pushing. I tend to think of Noël Coward as talent personified. He spoke of himself as having a "talent to amuse" and would never, no matter how great his success, have been so deceived as to think himself a genius. He was something of a connoisseur of talent. He thought, for example, that intelligent actors were "seldom as good as the unintelligent ones. Acting is an instinct. A gift that is often given to people who are very silly as people. But as they come on to the stage, up goes the temperature."

Coward's most recent biographer, Philip Hoare, claims that, "for a man with a notoriously low threshold of boredom, [Coward's talent] was a necessarily rapid talent." He was a terrifically fast worker, writing some of his most successful plays in less than a week. He was also determined to stay in the spotlight, which didn't hurt either. According to Katharine Hepburn, he had "no patience with weakness. He just thought it was stupid." Cecil Beaton, who was no admirer of Coward, noted of his skill as a performer that "nothing is left to chance; [it was created] by tremendous wit and polish." Noël Coward's estimate of his own talent strikes me as dead-on right: "My good fortune was to have a bright, acquisitive, but not, *not*, an intellectual mind, and to have been impelled by circumstances to get out and earn my living and help with the installments on the house."

I don't mean to sound like a University of Chicago economist, but perhaps no better forcing house for talent exists than the marketplace. Does anyone really want to buy what you, with your talent, produce? A daunting question, especially when one is young. Economic pressure pretty clearly works both ways: it can stimulate or eliminate talent, especially incipient talent. I sometimes think that if I had had the good fortune when young to have been given the equivalent of a MacArthur Foundation five-year grant, I would still be living in France, putting the finishing touches, in my late fifties, on a first volume of technically perfect, utterly vapid poems. I have a friend whose husband was one of sixteen cousins who had each been given a trust fund that brought, in the early 1980s, an annual income of roughly $60,000; only one of the sixteen finished college, the rest lapsed into drugs, alcoholism, purposeless travel, and other forms of ne'er-do-wellism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cyril Connolly, in *Enemies of Promise*, speaks of the discouragement that marriage and family life can bring to a young writer. I seem to remember his noting that few things can dishearten a young writer more than a "perambulator in the hall." Ravel thought artists shouldn't marry at all and that, because they existed in a dream state, doing so was an act of cruelty to the people they married. Yet the free, the single life can also have its baleful influences. In art, there are no rules, except the rule that there are no rules.

I was a married man responsible for four children when I was twenty-six. I don't recommend this as the best environment for testing one's talent, but it worked well to test mine. I couldn't, of course, make enough money through my writing to support this rather chaotic household—I, in fact, worked at various editing and social-work jobs—but this responsibility did teach me how to make use of time; and it taught me how much I wanted to write, which was as much as anything in the world. "It took me fifteen years to discover that I had no talent for writing," noted Robert Benchley, "but I couldn't give it up because by that time I was too famous." My own situation was that it took me fifteen years to discover that I had damn well better have a talent for writing, since I really couldn't give it up—by that time I knew that I was good for nothing else.

Things shouldn't be made too easy for talent—and they usually aren't. Most of the talented people I know who have gotten the best out of their talent are tough men and women, not at all the sensitive types that artists are supposed to be. A hostile environment only encourages them. They do, at least for a while, better work when they feel unappreciated. Too much appreciation often only depresses the talented. It encourages self-doubt. ("A best-seller," wrote Logan Pearsall Smith, "is the gilded tomb of a mediocre talent.") It removes the element of challenge and of fear. Fear—specifically fear of failure—is necessary. André Previn, no genius but a very talented musician, not long ago told an interviewer that he had engaged himself in a heavy conducting schedule because he worried about growing complacent; having to perform often as a conductor, with its challenge of public humiliation, sent enough fear through him to make life artistically exciting.

Solid generalizations about talent are not easily made. Why, for instance, does it show up in clusters, as it does in some endeavors—for example, among the writers of musical comedy between the 1920s and the 1950s—and then quite disappear? The 1920s seems the richest American decade for talent across the arts. But how account for the great Russian writers—novelists chiefly—of the second half of the nineteenth century, or the English Romantic poets of that century's first half? Then there was the astonishing seventeenth century in Dutch art, followed, as Huizinga put it, by "the general collapse of Dutch culture in the eighteenth century." A generation of astonishingly talented physicists, or biologists, or mathematicians will arise, then generations will pass in which the talent of the leading figures in each of these sciences seems so much less.

Some kinds of talent—in mathematics, in music, in athletics—are apparently reasonably predictable across generations within families. Other talents show up once and never reappear. Some skip a generation. Sometimes a generation will be skipped with two powerful talents operating in quite different fields on either side of it. The son of Moses Mendelssohn (the philosopher), who was also the father of Felix Mendelssohn, is supposed, poor fellow, to have exclaimed: "When I was young I was the son of the great Mendelssohn; now that I am older, I am the father of the great Mendelssohn." No talent, apparently, for Mr. Inbetween.

One mustn't forget, too, the slightly odious category of the too obviously talented. Talent shouldn't be allowed to lapse into pure showing off. It should never say, except with an understated and discreet charm, Look at me! "The legend of my modesty grew and grew, [and] I became extraordinarily unspoiled by my great success," said Noël Coward in 1936. "As a matter of fact, I still am." Most of the too obviously talented come, of course, from show business—Sammy Davis, Jr., Anthony Newley, Barbra Streisand, perhaps Liza Minnelli. Danny Kaye came close to falling into this category but narrowly averted it. Robin Williams falls into it. In literature, John Updike tends from time to time to lapse into it and becomes, like these others, a star bore. Even when they are frightfully good, the inability of such people to disguise their deep satisfaction with their own performance allows one easily

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to fight off the seduction of their magic and instead mutter to oneself, in the words of Queen Victoria: "We are not amused."

New York is clearly Talent Central in this country and, except at odd periods, always has been. In the past the talented felt they had to test themselves in New York: "If I can make it there," as the song has it, "I'll make it anywhere." One definition of talent—Stanislavsky's, actually—holds that it is "nothing but a prolonged period of attention and a shortened period of mental assimilation." The latter, which accounts for the quickness of New Yorkers, so many of whom are people from elsewhere who have brought their talents to market in New York, may contribute to the city's essential rudeness, which derives from its even more essential impatience. Everyone picks things up so quickly, and no pity goes to those slow people unable to keep the ball in play. What makes all the great world cities—London, Paris, New York—exciting is the unusually high proportion of talented people living in them.

Yet to live exclusively among the talented is not my idea of the good life. The talented can be charming, but there is a firm kernel of selfishness at the core—perhaps it *is* their core—of most people with talent. Certainly they tend to be rivalrous among themselves and often a bit contemptuous of people unlike themselves. "Every writer and artist wonders what in the world people of other professions can find to live for," Gerald Brenan once remarked. One can, if pressed, think perhaps of a few things: love, children, life itself outside the exercise of one's little talent. But these things are not likely to occur at first to the talented person, who has his mind on other things—or on one main thing, really, his talent.

It takes one, they say, to know one. And speaking as one, I do believe I know whereof I speak. Once I decided—with a minuscule portion of the world concurring—that I was a modestly talented fellow ("Don't be so humble," Golda Meir once said, "you're not that great"), I began to feel rather justified in my own selfish need to exercise that talent, and I have remained so. One of my greatest fears is that I shall not get the best out of myself, and so I find myself putting my work first against the claims of family, friends—just about everything else—and slightly resenting having to leave my desk for anything outside my work. It doesn't take much to imagine what an utter swine I'd be if I were a genius.

George Gershwin—who seems to me more accurately viewed as an immensely talented man rather than as a genius—clearly thought of himself as the latter. Talent bubbled out of him so richly, there was no holding it back. When he wrote songs for some new show, he couldn't resist playing them over and over for friends at parties—so much so that George Kaufman once suggested that, when people went to see the actual show, they might have thought it a revival. His self-absorption, one gathers, was complete, and it didn't include time for modesty. Once, traveling by train with Gershwin, Oscar Levant came into the sleeping compartment they shared to find Gershwin nicely settled in the lower berth, smoking a fine cigar. As Levant climbed into the upper berth, Gershwin, making plain the rightness of their sleeping arrangements, said, "Well, Oscar, it's the difference between a small talent and genius."

In the case of my own small talent, I came to recognize it chiefly because people told me I was talented. Whereas once I asked magazines to publish my work, magazines, with pleasing insistence, began to ask me. Praise, for which I have, I fear, an appalling appetite—the one appetite that hasn't seemed to diminish as I grow older—helped, too, though my pleasure in praise became qualified and somewhat refined. I liked praise above all from those men and women whose own talents I admired. (I should have liked it even more from the great figures of the past, though I know this presents certain technical difficulties.) Suddenly, I found myself in (mild) demand. Would I agree to write a movie? Might I agree to a three-day professorship in Texas? Would I give a lecture in London? A woman in Seattle, a perfect stranger, wrote to say that she would pay my airplane ticket and other expenses if I would agree to appear at a birthday dinner for her husband, who is among my most devoted readers—her plan is for me to be his surprise birthday present.

This is all very nice. It puts a touch of excitement into the trip down to the mailbox. But does it finally convince me, finally reassure me of the quality of such talent as I might have? Of course it doesn't. So many others—names on request—even less talented than I garner even more of the world's little rewards, which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has served to divest so many of the sequins from the glittering prizes.

Although there may sometimes seem to be a basic injustice in the way talent is distributed in the world, this injustice is modified somewhat by the fact that those with talent—except when they are working with it—aren't made very happy by it. People who have the gift for moneymaking often seem to acquire little direct pleasure from the piling up of money. People with musical gifts, I have noticed, are often hounded into unhappiness by their perfectionism. Athletes must be haunted by the day, never far off, when their talent will be spent and no longer of value. "Blessed are those without talent," Emerson noted in his *Journal*, and the remark, when one thinks a bit about it, isn't quite as paradoxical as at first it might seem.

In a limited sense, I suppose, we do live in something resembling a talentocracy. Once it is decided that a person has talent of a sort that is admired, gates open to him, hands reach out to light his cigar, dinners are offered. Talent can confer social freedom of a sort. I was born into the philistine middle class, and most of my circle of friends today belong to what the English call "the chattering classes," but I feel that, in a pleasing way, my small talent has sprung me from the class system or at least away from any anxiety about social class.

My talent is to unfurl rather oblique observations in sentences that, if properly spun, sometimes yield a small surprise. I operate at the level of the sentence. I live less in the world than in my head. I long for a wisdom I know I shall never attain. I am a writer lucky beyond all luck to have found not only his forms but his perfect audience. The number of this audience is small—four or five thousand maybe—but select, and of them a respectable proportion, at one time or another, has written to me. ("My correspondence," I have been heard to yell, in my best Butterfly McQueen voice, "is killing me.") I have the readers I deserve; and—*mirabile dictu*—they turn out to be people a lot like me. Nothing I write is over their heads or beyond their imaginations. ("It appears that my stuff has been over their heads," wrote Henry James apropos of the excuse given him for having been fired as the Paris correspondent of the New York *Tribune*. "Imagine their stature!") Although many of my readers write very well, the chief difference between us is that I have put in rather more time learning how to shape my sentences than they, and I have turned out graphomaniacal.

Mine is a talent that has nothing to do with originality. (This is probably why I remain a minor writer—a category I rather like.) Mine is instead a talent for a certain quality of literary intimacy. I am sometimes able to say what other people think but have not yet formulated for themselves. And when I am able to say it correctly, with lucidity and wit, I can, for my limited audience, give pleasure, amusement, and—if I'm really cooking—a touch of solace.

What is in all this for me? What's in it, as the crassest of agents might say, for the talent? Work is for me the antidote, not for any of the world's ills, but for all of my own. Work keeps the black dog from the door, the blue funk on the other side of the window. When working well, my life falls into place; I needn't search for life's meaning but seem temporarily to have found it; I am, in a world not notably arranged for sustained felicity, as close to happiness as I am likely to get. That's what's in it for the talent—the sweet delight in exercising one's gifts—and that is everything.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Kevorkian Epidemic

PAUL R. McHUGH

DR. JACK KEVORKIAN of Detroit has been in the papers most days this past summer and autumn helping sick people kill themselves. He is said to receive hundreds of calls a week. Although his acts are illegal by statute and common law in Michigan, no one stops him. Many citizens, including members of three juries, believe he means well, perhaps thinking: Who knows? Just maybe, we ourselves shall need his services some day.

To me it looks like madness from every quarter. The patients are mad by definition in that they are suicidally depressed and demoralized; Dr. Kevorkian is "certifiable" in that his passions render him, as the state code specifies, "dangerous to others"; and the usually reliable people of Michigan are confused and anxious to the point of incoherence by terrors of choice that are everyday issues for doctors. These three disordered parties have converged, provoking a local epidemic of premature death.

Let me begin with the injured hosts of this epidemic, the patients mad by definition. At this writing, more than forty, as best we know, have submitted to Dr. Kevorkian's deadly charms. They came to him with a variety of medical conditions: Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, chronic pain, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, cancer, drug addiction, and more. These are certainly disorders from which anyone might seek relief. But what kind of relief do patients with these conditions usually seek when they do not have a Dr. Kevorkian to extinguish their pain?

Both clinical experience and research on this question are extensive—and telling. A search for death does not accompany most terminal or progressive diseases. Pain-ridden patients customarily call doctors for remedies, not for termination of life. Physical incapacity, as with advanced arthritis, does not generate suicide. Even amyotrophic

✪ PAUL R. McHUGH is the Henry Phipps Professor and Director of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and author, with Phillip R. Slavney, of *The Perspectives of Psychiatry* and *Psychiatric Polarities.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease, a harrowing condition I shall describe presently, is not associated with increased suicide amongst its sufferers. Most doctors learn these facts as they help patients and their families burdened by these conditions.

But we don't have to rely solely upon the testimonies of experienced physicians. Recently cancer patients in New England were asked about their attitudes toward death. The investigators—apparently surprised to discover a will to live when they expected to find an urge to die—reported in the *Lancet* (vol. 347, pp. 1805–1810, 1996) two striking findings. First, that cancer patients enduring pain were not inclined to want euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide. In fact, "patients actually experiencing pain were more likely to find euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide unacceptable." Second, those patients inclined toward suicide—whether in pain or not—were suffering from depression. As the investigators noted: "These data indicate a conflict between attitudes and possible practices related to euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. These *interventions* were approved of for terminally ill patients with unremitting pain, but these are not the patients most likely to request such *interventions*. . . . There is *some* concern that with legislation of euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide non-psychiatric physicians, who generally have a poor ability to detect and treat depression, may allow life-ending *interventions* when treatment of depression may be more appropriate." (Italics added to identify mealymouthed expressions: *interventions* means homicides, and *some* means that we investigators should stay cool in our concerns—after all, it's not we who are dying.)

None of this is news to psychiatrists who have studied suicides associated with medical illnesses. Depression, the driving force in most cases, comes in two varieties: symptomatic depression found as a feature of particular diseases—that is, as one of the several symptoms of that disease; and demoralization, the common state of mind of people in need of guidance but facing discouraging circumstances alone. Both forms of depression render patients vulnerable to feelings of hopelessness that, if not adequately confronted, may lead to suicide.

Let me first concentrate on the symptomatic depressions because an understanding of them illuminates much of the problem. By the term *symptomatic*, psychiatrists mean that with some physical diseases suicidal depression is one of the condition's characteristic features. Careful students of these diseases come to appreciate that this variety of depression is not to be accepted as a natural feeling of discouragement provoked by bad circumstances—that is, similar to the down-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hearted state of, say, a bankrupt man or a grief-stricken widow. Instead the depression we are talking about here, with its beclouding of judgment, sense of misery, and suicidal inclinations, is a symptom identical in nature to the fevers, pains, or loss of energy that are signs of the disease itself.

A good and early example of the recognition of symptomatic depression is found in George Huntington's classical (1872) description of the disorder eventually named after him: Huntington's disease. Huntington had first seen the condition when he was a youth visiting patients with his father, a family doctor on Long Island. He noted that one of the characteristic features of the condition was "the tendency to . . . that form of insanity which leads to suicide." Even now between 7 and 10 percent of non-hospitalized patients with Huntington's disease do succeed in killing themselves. Psychiatrists and neurologists have perceived that Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, AIDS dementia, and some cerebral-vascular strokes all have this same tendency to provoke "that form of insanity which leads to suicide."

That these patients are insane is certain. They are overcome with a sense of hopelessness and despair, often with the delusional belief that they are in some way useless, burdensome, or even corrupt perpetrators of evil. One of my patients with Huntington's disease felt that Satan was dwelling within her and that she acted in accordance with his wishes. These patients lose their capacity to concentrate and reason, they have a pervasive and unremitting feeling of gloom, and a constant, even eager willingness to accept death. These characteristics of symptomatic depression recur in all the diseases mentioned above. Multiple sclerosis (MS) patients are frequently afflicted by it. Some five or six of Dr. Kevorkian's patients had MS.

The problematic nature of symptomatic depression goes beyond the painful state of mind of the patient. Other observers—such as family members and physicians—may well take the depressive's disturbed, indeed insane, point of view as a proper assessment of his or her situation. It was this point that Huntington, long before the time of modern anti-depressant treatment, wished to emphasize by identifying it as an insanity. He knew that failure to diagnose this feature will lead to the neglect of efforts to treat the patient properly and to protect him or her from suicide until the symptom remits.

Such neglect is a crucial blunder, because, whether the underlying condition is Huntington's disease, Alzheimer's disease, MS, or something else, modern anti-depressant treatment is usually effective at relieving the mood disorder and restoring the patient's emotional equilibrium. In Michigan and in Holland, where physician-assisted

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suicide also takes place, these actions to hasten death are the ultimate neglect of patients with symptomatic depression; they are, really, a form of collusion with insanity.

The diagnosis of symptomatic depression is not overly difficult if its existence is remembered and its features systematically sought. But many of its characteristics—such as its capacity to provoke bodily pains—are not known to all physicians. The fact that such depression occurs in dire conditions, such as Huntington's disease, may weigh against its prompt diagnosis and treatment. Again and again, kindly intended physicians presume that a depression "makes sense"—given the patient's situation—and overlook the stereotypic signs of the insanity. They presume justifiable demoralization and forget the pharmacologically treatable depressions.

Over the last decade, at least among psychiatrists, the reality of symptomatic depressions has become familiar and treatment readiness has become the rule. Yet not all sick patients with life-threatening depression have symptomatic depressions. Many physically ill patients are depressed for perfectly understandable reasons, given the grueling circumstances of their progressive and intractable disease. Just as any misfortune can provoke grief and anxiety, so can awareness of loss of health and of a closed future.

Well-titled *demoralization*, this depression, too, has a number of attributes. It waxes and wanes with experiences and events, comes in waves, and is worse at certain times—such as during the night, when contemplating future discomforts and burdens, and when the patient is alone or uninstructed about the benefits that modern treatments can bring him.

In contrast to the symptomatic depressions that run their own course almost independent of events, demoralization is sensitive to circumstances and especially to the conduct of doctors toward the patient. Companionship, especially that which provides understanding and clear explanations of the actions to be taken in opposing disease and disability, can be immensely helpful in overcoming this state and sustaining the patient in a hopeful frame of mind.

The obverse is also true. If faced by inattentive physicians—absentee physicians most commonly—patients can become more discouraged and utterly demoralized by what they assume is their physician's resignation from a hopeless battle. All patients afflicted with disease—curable or incurable—are susceptible to bleak assumptions about their future and their value. These susceptibilities can be magnified or diminished by the behavior of their physicians.

The therapeutic implication here is that despairing assumptions

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wither if directly combated and shown to be an inaccurate analysis of the situation. Demoralization is an eminently treatable mental condition. Hopeless doctors, however, ready to see patients as untreatable, produce hopeless patients. The combination of the two produces a zeal for terminating effort. "What's the point?" becomes the cry of both patient and doctor.

This is the point: Depression, both in the form of a symptomatic mental state and in the form of demoralization, is the result of illness and circumstances combined and is treatable just as are other effects of illness. These treatments are the everyday skills of many physicians, but particularly of those physicians who are specialists in these disorders and can advance the treatments most confidently.

Most suicidally depressed patients are not rational individuals who have weighed the balance sheet of their lives and discovered more red than black ink. They are victims of altered attitudes about themselves and their situation, which cause powerful feelings of hopelessness to abound. Doctors can protect them from these attitudes by providing information, guidance, and support all along the way. Dr. Kevorkian, however, trades upon the vulnerabilities and mental disorders of these patients and in so doing makes a mockery of medicine as a discipline of informed concern for patients.

Let us turn to Dr. Kevorkian, the agent of this epidemic in Michigan, and consider why I think that he is "certifiably" insane, by which I mean that he suffers from a mental condition rendering him dangerous to others.

Without question, Dr. Kevorkian has proven himself dangerous, having participated in killing more than forty people already, with no end in sight. Dr. Kevorkian, by the way, does not shy from the word *killing.* He prescribes it and even coined a term for his practice—*medicide,* that is: "the termination of life performed by . . . professional medical personnel (such as a doctor, nurse, paramedic, physician's assistant, or medical technologist)." [Kevorkian, J., *Prescription: Medicide,* Prometheus Books, Buffalo, New York, 1991, page 202.] (Note his sense of a whole industry of killing to come, with much of it to be carried out by technicians because the doctors are busy.)

The question is whether his behavior is a product of a mental disorder. Not everyone agrees on an answer. Indeed the *British Medical Journal* (*BMJ*) described Dr. Kevorkian as a "hero."

His champions see no discernible motive for Dr. Kevorkian other than that he believes his work is fitting. The *BMJ* notes that greed for money or fame or some sadistic urge does not motivate Dr. Kevorkian. They make much of the fact that he does not charge a fee for killing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Because of the absence of such motives, the editors presume that he is a hero among doctors since it is only a "personal code of honor that admits of no qualification" that leads him into action.

But let us look rather more closely at "personal codes that admit no qualification." We have seen a few of them before and not all were admirable. As Dr. Kevorkian motors around Michigan carrying cylinders of carbon monoxide or bottles of potassium chloride to dispatch the sick, his is the motivation of a person with an "overvalued idea," a diagnostic formulation first spelled out by the psychiatrist Carl Wernicke in 1906. Wernicke differentiated overvalued ideas from obsessions and delusions. Overvalued ideas are often at the motivational heart of "personal codes that admit no qualification" and certainly provide a drive as powerful as that of hunger for money, fame, or sexual gratification.

An individual with an overvalued idea is someone who has taken up an idea shared by others in his milieu or culture and transformed it into a ruling passion or "monomania" for himself. It becomes the goal of all his efforts and he is prepared to sacrifice everything—family, reputation, health, even life itself—for it. He presumes that what he does in its service is right regardless of any losses that he or others suffer for it. He sees all opposition as at best misguided and at worst malevolent.

For Dr. Kevorkian, people may die before their time and the fabric of their families may be torn apart, but it's all for the good if he can presume they were "suffering pain unnecessarily" and he has eliminated it. He scorns all opposition—in particular constitutional democratic opposition—as resting on bad faith or ignorance. Empowered by his idea, he feels free to disregard the law and any of its officers.

An overvalued idea has three characteristics: (1) it is a self-dominating but not idiosyncratic opinion, given great importance by (2) intense emotional feelings over its significance, and evoking (3) persistent behavior in its service. For Dr. Kevorkian, thinking about how to terminate the sick has become his exclusive concern. His belief in the justice of his ideas is intense enough for him to starve himself if thwarted by law.

Dr. Kevorkian thinks that all opposition to him is "bad faith" and thus worthy of contempt—a contempt he expresses with no reservation. He is fond of saying that the judicial system of our country is "corrupt," the religious members of our society are "irrational," the medical profession is "insane," the press is "meretricious."

He considers his own behavior "humanitarian." Dr. Kevorkian holds himself beyond reproach, even after killing one patient he believed had multiple sclerosis but whose autopsy revealed no evidence

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of that disease and another patient with the vague condition of "chronic fatigue syndrome" in whom no pathological process could be found at autopsy—only Kevorkian's poison. He acts without taking a careful medical history, trying alternative treatments, or reflecting on how his actions affect such people as surviving family members.

Dr. Kevorkian's is a confident business. As the news reports flow out of Michigan, it appears that his threshold for medicide is getting lower. Physician-assisted suicide that had previously demanded an incurable disease such as Alzheimer's is now practiced upon patients with such chronic complaints as pelvic pain and emphysema, whose life expectancy cannot be specified. He can justify the active termination of anyone with an ailment—which is just what might be expected once the boundary against active killing by doctors has been breached. What's to stop him now that juries have found his actions to be de facto legal in Michigan?

A crucial aspect of overvalued ideas is that, in contrast to delusions, they are not idiosyncratic. They are ideas that can be found in a proportion of the public—often an influential proportion. It is from such reservoirs of opinion that the particular individual harnesses and amplifies an idea with the disproportionate zeal characteristic of a ruling passion. That Dr. Kevorkian can find people in the highest places—even within the medical profession—to support his ideas and say that they see heroism in his actions is not surprising, given the passion of the contemporary debate over euthanasia. In this way the person with the overvalued idea may be seen, by those who share his opinion but not his self-sacrificing zeal, as giving expression to their hopes—disregarding the slower processes of democracy, filled with prejudice against all who resist, and pumped up with a sense of a higher purpose and justice.

People such as Dr. Kevorkian have found a place in history. With some, with the passage of time, we come to agree with the idea if not the method by which the idea was first expressed. Such was John Brown, the abolitionist, ready to hack five anonymous farmers to death in the Pottowatomi massacre to advance his cause. With others we may come to tolerate some aspect of the idea but see its expression in actual behavior as ludicrous. Such was Carry Nation, the scourge of Kansas barkeeps and boozers, who went to jail hundreds of times for chopping up saloons with a small hatchet in the cause of temperance. Finally, for some, we come to recognize the potential for horror in an overvalued idea held by a person in high authority. Such was Adolf Hitler.

But how is it that anxieties and confusions about medical practice and death can so afflict the judicious people of Michigan as to para-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lyze them before the outrageous behavior of Dr. Kevorkian and thus generate an environment for this epidemic? In Michigan these states of mind derive from conflicting concerns over medical decisions. The citizens—like any inexpert group—are relatively uninformed about what doctors can do for patients, even in extreme situations. Conflicting goals and unfamiliar practices—common enough around medical decisions—produce anxiety and confusion every time.

No one thinks happily about dying, especially dying in pain. Death is bad; dying can be worse. Anyone who says he does not fear dying—and all the pain and suffering tied to it—has probably not experienced much in life.

This concern, though, certainly has been exaggerated in our times, even though now much can be done to relieve the heaviest burdens of terminally ill patients. Yet through a variety of sources—such as movies, newspapers, and essays—all the negative aspects of dying have been emphasized, the agonies embellished, and the loss of control represented by disease accentuated. Horror stories feed upon one another, and rumors of medical lack of interest grow into opinions that doctors both neglect the dying and hold back relief. Doctors are regularly accused of surrendering to professional taboos or to legal advice to avoid risk of malpractice or prosecution—and in this way are presumed ready to sacrifice their patients out of selfish fear for themselves.

On the contrary, most doctors try to collaborate with patients and do listen to their wishes, especially when treatments that carry painful burdens are contemplated. As Dr. Kevorkian can demonstrate—with videotapes, no less—the patients he killed asked him repeatedly for help in dying rather than for help in living. Do not they have some right to die at their own hands steadied by Dr. Kevorkian? Is not the matter of assisted suicide simply a matter of rights and wants to which any citizen of Michigan is entitled?

The idea of a right to suicide provokes most psychiatrists. Psychiatry has worked to teach everyone that suicide is not an uncomplicated, voluntary act to which rights attach. It has shown that suicide is an act provoked, indeed compelled, by mental disorder—such as a disorienting depression or a set of misdirected, even delusionary, ideas. In that sense psychiatry taught that suicidal people were not "responsible" for this behavior—no matter what they said or wrote in final letters or testaments—any more than they would be for epileptic seizures.

This idea—generated from the careful study of the clinical circumstances and past histories of suicidal patients—gradually prevailed in civil law and even in the canon law of churches. As a result, laws against suicide were repealed—not to make suicide a "right" but to remove it from the status of a crime.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We psychiatrists thought we had done a worthy thing for our society, for families of patients, and even for patients themselves. We were not saying, not for a moment, that we approved of suicide. Far from it. We knew such deaths to be ugly and misguided—misguided in particular because the disposition to die, the wish for suicide, was, on inspection, often a symptom of the very mental disorders that psychiatry treats. Suicide in almost all cases is as far from a rational choice based on a weighing of the balance books of life as is responding to hallucinated voices or succumbing to the paranoid ideas of a charismatic madman such as Jim Jones, who at Jonestown directed a gruesome exhibition of mass assisted suicide.

Psychiatrists were united in their views about suicide and shook their heads when contemplating past traditions when suicides were considered scandalous. We did not think too deeply into the consequences of our actions. For, after suicide ceased to be a crime, it soon became a right and, conceivably under some circumstances, such as when costs of care grow onerous, an obligation. Psychiatrists, who had worked for decades demonstrating that suicides were insane acts, are now recruited in Holland to assure that requests for suicide made by patients offered "no hope of cure" by their doctors are "rational."

What had begun as an effort at explanation and understanding of the tragic act of suicide has developed into complicity in the seduction of vulnerable people into that very behavior. The patients are seduced just as the victims in Jonestown were—by isolating them, sustaining their despair, revoking alternatives, stressing examples of others choosing to die, and sweetening the deadly poison by speaking of death with dignity. If even psychiatrists succumb to this complicity with death, what can be expected of the lay public in Michigan?

At the heart of the confusion lies the contention that if the aim of medicine is to eliminate suffering and if only the killing of the patient will relieve the suffering, then killing is justified. On this logic rests Dr. Kevorkian's repeatedly successful defense before the juries of Michigan.

Yet the aim of medicine cannot simply be to prevent suffering. Not only would that be an impossible task, given the nature of human life, but it would diminish the scope of human potential—almost all of which demands some travail. The elimination of suffering is a veterinary rather than a medical goal. But veterinarians eliminate their animal subjects for other reasons than suffering. This fact can occasionally startle us.

When the race horse Cavonnier, second in the 1996 Kentucky Derby, pulled up lame during the Belmont Stakes later in the year,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

everyone watching on television feared that he must have broken a bone in his leg, with the inevitable consequences. His trainer provided brief comfort when he came on television to describe what had turned out to be a ligamentous rather than a bony injury to the animal. "This will probably end his racing career," he noted, "but it is not a life-threatening injury." He then paused, before adding, "However, he *is* a gelding." An ominous comment for Cavonnier and one worth remembering when anyone says, in defense of killing infirm people, "They shoot horses, don't they?" They do, but for many reasons other than just to protect horses from suffering. Sometimes it's to save money. Are we ready for the Cavonnier test for ourselves?

The idea that diseases herald only mortality and death, to be hurried along if their burdens are overwhelming, is not only an ethical error but a fundamental misunderstanding of contemporary medical science. Contemporary physician/scientists do not think of diseases as "entities," "things," "maledictions," and, in this sense, signposts to the grave, but as processes in life for which the body has ways of compensating and resisting, even if only temporarily. Diseases, in this way, are construed as forms of life under altered circumstances rather than as modes of death.

Because diseases are processes rather than entities, efforts to sustain life, alleviate symptoms, and moderate impairments represent collaborations with nature itself. These efforts remain the essence of doctoring, the whole reason for investing in the study of diseases and the body's responses to them. Physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia attack the very premises on which medical science and practice are progressing today and do so by denying the life that scientific conceptions of disease represent. Life with dignity—not death with dignity—is what doctors aim for in their practice and in their science.

Medicine is one of the practical arts—a fact old enough to be known to Aristotle—among which are included navigation, economics, and architecture and for which the goal is usually obvious and unquestioned. For medicine, actions to prevent, alleviate, and cure are aimed at the obvious goal of sustaining the life and health of patients. Technical progress through scientific discoveries assists these actions, rendering them more effective. But modern techniques can seem in some circumstances to forestall the inevitable, prolong suffering, deny reality with little or no gain to the patient. Dr. Kevorkian writes and disseminates stories on this theme to justify his actions and to bolster his support. Allow me to present a story in which the conflict between preserving life and surrendering to disease was resolved by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doctors who recognized their limits while striving to facilitate and extend a person's best experiences.

Nelson Butters was one of America's most distinguished neuropsychologists of the last twenty-five years. He died in 1995 at age fifty-eight after suffering for just under three years from the nightmare known as Lou Gehrig's disease. This disease is a relentless and progressive wasting of the body because of an atrophic degeneration of the nerves that innervate the muscles. As the body wastes away over the course of months, the mind is customarily unaffected and witnesses these depredations. It anticipates further weakness and ultimate death from a loss of strength to breathe. Such an affliction you would not wish on your worst enemy. Dr. Jack Kevorkian lives to terminate—the earlier the better—any patient smitten by it.

My colleague and friend Nelson Butters saw it through to its natural end. In so doing—without making it his mission—he rebuked those who cannot (or will not) differentiate incurable diseases, of which there are many, from untreatable patients, of which there are few.

Nelson was a great scientist and an indomitable man. He took on all of life's challenges, personal and professional, with vigor and courage. But when he learned that he had Lou Gehrig's disease, he was shaken and responded with a most natural discouragement. "I'd rather die than be helpless," he said several times to his doctors. Yet he proved willing to try the assistance they offered him at each of the bad patches in his course, so that he could continue to enjoy what remained despite his illness. He had neurologists aiding him with his growing weakness, and he had psychiatrists and psychologists ready to assist him when he was tormented by his prospects.

He had bad times. They came mostly when some partial surrender to the disease was required—accepting a wheelchair, retreating to bed, undergoing a tracheostomy to facilitate breathing—but after each procedure, and despite its implicit indication that his condition was progressing, he recovered his cheer as he found himself more comfortable and able to continue his work with students and colleagues and his life with his family.

Like Stephen Hawking, Nelson toward the end made use of computers to communicate and work. This permitted him to edit a major journal in neuropsychology, even when he could move only one finger and then only one toe. With these small movements he used E-mail to write to colleagues everywhere—usually on professional matters, but also to transmit amusing academic gossip.

Eventually, Nelson lost all his strength. He was left with only eye-blinking signals, breathing with the help of a machine. Then he asked his doctors, with his family around him, that the ventilator cease

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

breathing for him. This was done, and on a weekend he slipped into a coma and died—thirty-four months after his symptoms began.

Nelson, his family, and his doctors had achieved much together. They fought to enable him to sustain purposeful life as long as possible. They weathered distressing, powerfully painful portions of his clinical course. The doctors never suggested a poison to shorten his life. When there was still something to do, they encouraged him to try to do it and helped allay his reluctance at the prospect. And in the end they surrendered to the illness without betraying their mission or letting contemporary technology drag them along.

It was grim. Everyone who knew him was saddened to think that Nelson had to suffer so. But everyone also was struck by how he overcame the disease by staying purposeful, lively, and wittily intelligent right through to the end, teaching much to all of us.

I tell this story because many believe that permitting a progressive infirmity to continue right out to its natural end is cruel and pointless. It certainly is tough. Any gains need to be identified. In fact, the gains for Nelson Butters were several.

Most obvious among them was the continuation of Nelson's work as a scientist, an editor, and a teacher for many months, despite his illness. This was no trivial gain, for he was an inventive scientist with deep insight into his discipline. He continued to function effectively and to enjoy his work and the accomplishments of his students.

Another gain was an extended duration of Nelson's company to his family and his friends. Again, no trivial matter, for he was a lovable person. One of his daughters decided to help nurse him through his trials, and after his death, reflecting on all she had seen and done, she decided to take up a career in nursing incapacitated people.

Finally, there was the appreciation—to the point of amazement—on the part of his doctors of the value he fashioned from their efforts to help him. They told me how he had taken what they offered and made more of it—more than they expected and more in the form of continuing work and personal life—than they thought could be achieved. This was as true of the neurologists who offered means to offset his physical impairments as it was of the psychiatrists who at times of particular discouragement helped him keep going.

These gains were made easier because Nelson was such a good man and had such a good family to support him. Yet I sensed the awe felt by the doctors themselves for what had been accomplished in the end. Almost despite themselves and their own feelings about this awful disease, they had been partners with Nelson in a great achievement. They had carried out excellently the task set before doctors—help the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

patient encounter and resist the chaos of disease for as long as possible—and thus preserve the purposeful character of life to its end.

In Nelson's life a set of interwoven but distinct purposes—husband, father, teacher, scientist—were sustained by him with the help of several doctors. And this happened despite the depredations of a crushing disease and the recurrent waves of discouragement that naturally accompany the loss of vitality and the realization of impending death.

But there was something more in Nelson's story. For all that he was surrounded by devoted nurses, technicians, family, and physicians, death came to him alone just as it will to each of us. Its approach confronts us all with the challenge to decide what moves us, what matters most, what we love. Nelson loved life. He wanted as much of it as he could have. Through this love he won a victory over death—for himself, for his family, for all who knew him.

This is really what distinguishes him from Dr. Kevorkian, his sad victims, and those who support his cause. None of them love life the way Nelson did—not enough, certainly, to work hard and suffer much for it, not enough to appreciate it throughout its course, when it flickers just as much as when it glows. And certainly not enough to realize that sometimes we need help to protect it so that we don't throw it away.

To be on the side of life provides a source of sanity. Be on the side of life and your course is clear, your efforts concentrated, the rules coherent. Bad patches can then be overcome, and even bad luck such as befell my friend Nelson Butters can be turned into something good. Be on the side of death and things fall apart, chaos reigns, and the fearful passions evoked by conflicting aims make malice, misdirection, sentiment, and compassion all look the same.

One can think of ways to combat the deadly convergence of madnesses in Michigan and to deter the spread of this local epidemic to other regions of our country. The suicidal patients certainly should be treated for their depressive vulnerabilities by doctors able to assist them with their underlying illnesses. Dr. Kevorkian, the agent of their extinction, should be stopped by whatever means the state has at its disposal to stay dangerous men. And the people of Michigan should be taught about the capacities of modern medicine. With this information, the hope is, they will emerge from their anxious confusions, accept mortality for what it is rather than for what they imagine, and, at last, end their support for this insanity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

December Days

MICHAEL BLUMENTHAL

Things work: the days grow cold,
buildings rise up and collapse, lust
seems a memory, then it returns.
Oh well, the day's yours—why not
make a small mess, a puddle of contrition
somewhere? Even birds stumble occasionally,
on a tricky branch, hidden from view.
And if it's ever marvelous
to have been born, why not today?

Yesterday, you were a moralist—
things seemed somber, judgmental. But
today you're heavenly, like sunrise:
everything you ever knew of good & evil
is just foam, now, in the steamed milk
that's the cloud cover over your cappuccino.
And, as for your childhood—well,
why not forget it? So, you were
miserable once. *Wasn't everybody?*

Today, there's frost on the windows,
the abandoned nests of birds
are vivid in the trees, waiting
to be identified. Silly boy, it's not
only Bach who wrote a *Magnificat*,
but everyone who can compose
out of the duff and detritus of his life
a single day, a karma realized,
a rapture of one's own.

✪ MICHAEL BLUMENTHAL is the author of, most recently, *The Wages of Goodness* (a book of poems) and *Weinstock Among the Dying* (a novel), which won the 1994 Harold U. Ribelow Fiction Prize from *Hadassah Magazine*. "December Days" is from a new manuscript of poems entitled "Dusty Angel."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Requiem for Judith Resnick

DAVI WALDERS

The world looks great.
—Judith Resnick from the space
shuttle *Discovery*, 1984

Sometimes as though you were hovering,
as though you wished someone—anyone

to remember, I see you, a young girl
polishing her shoes, packing her lunch,

concentrating and deliberate, each choice
as serious as the dinner discussions,

Torah portion and algebra equations
that challenged you. Granddaughter

of a *shochet*, connected to ritual, family
and community, I see you, not here

on Bethesda streets walking among us
during your long years of preparation,

but far away, as in those one hundred
forty hours floating beyond the pull

of gravity or in dim, humming rooms,
just above charts and graphs, searching

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

green screens for red warning lights.
Pilot of your own fearless trajectory,

always the first to arrive, to board,
you are the first to settle into that

locked weightlessness, rising again
those last moments of lift-off given

neither wings, nor chariot, nor chance
to fly too near the sun, leaving us

only the grace of a woman doing her
job and the dignity of your name,

that, too, eclipsed by others.

✪ DAVI WALDERS is a writer and an education consultant living in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Her work appears in numerous journals, magazines, and anthologies, including *Grow Old Along with Me—The Best Is Yet To Be* and *Worlds in Our Words: Contemporary American Women Writers.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Merely Very Good

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

EARLY IN 1981 I received an invitation to give a lecture at a writer's conference that was being held someplace on the Delaware River in Pennsylvania, just across from New Jersey. I don't remember the exact location, but a study of the map persuades me that it was probably New Hope. My first inclination was to say no. There were several reasons. I was living in New York City and teaching full-time. My weekends were precious and the idea of getting up before dawn on a Saturday, renting a car, and driving across the entire state of New Jersey to deliver a lecture was repellent. As I recall, the honorarium offered would have barely covered the expense. Furthermore, a subject had been suggested for my lecture that, in truth, no longer interested me. Since I both wrote and did physics, I had often been asked to discuss the connection—if any—between these two activities. When this first came up, I felt obligated to say something, but after twenty years, about the only thing that I felt like saying was that both physics and writing, especially if one wanted to do them well, were extremely difficult.

The conference seemed to be centered on poetry, and one of the things that came to mind was an anecdote that Robert Oppenheimer used to tell about himself. Since Oppenheimer will play a significant role in what follows, I will elaborate. After Oppenheimer graduated from Harvard in 1925—in three years, summa cum laude—he was awarded a fellowship to study in Europe. Following a very unhappy time in England, where he seems to have had a sort of nervous breakdown—he physically attacked an old friend, Francis Fergusson, apparently following an intimate discussion he and Fergusson had been having about Oppenheimer's feelings of sexual inadequacy—he went to Germany to get his Ph.D. He studied with the distinguished German theoretical physicist Max Born in Göttingen and took his degree there in 1927 at the age of twenty-three. Born's recollections of

✪ JEREMY BERNSTEIN is the author of several books, including *Cranks, Quarks, and the Cosmos, The Uranium Club,* and, most recently, *A Theory for Everything.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Oppenheimer, which were published posthumously in 1975, were not sympathetic. Oppenheimer, he wrote, "was a man of great talent and he was conscious of his superiority in a way which was embarrassing and led to trouble. In my ordinary seminar on quantum mechanics, he used to interrupt the speaker, whoever it was, not excluding myself, and to step to the blackboard, taking the chalk and declaring: 'This can be done much better in the following manner. . . .'" In fact, it got so bad that Oppenheimer's fellow students in the seminar petitioned Born to put a stop to it.

Quantum mechanics had been invented in the year before by Erwin Schrödinger, Werner Heisenberg—also a Born disciple—and Paul A. M. Dirac. The next year, Dirac came as a visitor to Göttingen and, as it happened, roomed in the large house of a physician named Cario where Oppenheimer also had a room. Dirac was twenty-five. The two young men became friends—insofar as one could have a friendship with Dirac. As young as he was, Dirac was already a great physicist, and I am sure he knew it. He probably just took it for granted. However, he was, and remained, an enigma. He rarely spoke, but when he did, it was always with extraordinary precision and often with devastating effect. This must have had a profound effect on Oppenheimer. While Oppenheimer was interrupting Born's seminars, announcing that he could do calculations better in the quantum theory, Dirac, only two years older, had *invented* the subject. In any event, in the course of things, the two of them often went for walks. In the version of the story that I heard Oppenheimer tell, they were walking one evening on the walls that surrounded Göttingen and got to discussing Oppenheimer's poetry. He had published, and continued to publish, poems in such places as *Hound and Horn.* I would imagine that the "discussion" was more like an Oppenheimer monologue, which was abruptly interrupted by Dirac, who asked, "How can you do both poetry and physics? In physics we try to give people an understanding of something that nobody knew before, whereas in poetry . . . " Oppenheimer allowed one to fill in the rest of the sentence. As interesting as it might have been to hear the responses, this did not seem to be the sort of anecdote that would go over especially well at a conference devoted to poetry.

Pitted against these excellent reasons for not going to the conference were two others that finally carried the day. In the first place, I was in the beginning stages of a love affair with a young woman who wanted very much to write. She wanted to write so much that she had resigned a lucrative job with an advertising agency and was giving herself a year in which, living on her savings, she was going to do nothing but write. It was a gutsy thing to do, but like many people—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

most, no doubt—who try it, she was finding it pretty rough going. In fact, she was rather discouraged. So, to cheer her up, I suggested attending this conference where she might have a chance to talk with other people who were in the same boat. This aside, I had read in the tentative program of the conference that one of the other tutors was to be Stephen Spender. This, for reasons I will now explain, was decisive. I should begin by saying right off that I am not a great admirer of Spender's poetry. He is, for me, one of those people whose writing about their writing is more interesting than their writing itself. But I had read with great interest Spender's autobiography—*World Within World*—especially for what it revealed about the poet who did mean the most to me—namely, W. H. Auden. Auden's Dirac-like lucidity, the sheer wonder of the language, and the sense of fun about serious things—"At least my modern pieces shall be cheery / Like English bishops on the Quantum Theory"—were to me irresistible. I became fascinated by Spender's obsession with Auden. Auden must have been to Spender what Dirac was for Oppenheimer, a constant reminder of the difference between being "great" and being "merely" very good. I was also struck by the fact that, like Oppenheimer, Spender seemed "unfocused." Partly Jewish, partly homosexual, partly Communist, partly a British establishment figure, one wondered when he got time to write poetry. By being profoundly eccentric, both Auden and Dirac, probably not by accident, insulated themselves. They focused like laser beams. What I did not know in 1981—I only learned it after Spender's journals were published in 1986—was that Spender had paid a brief visit to the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in November of 1956, the year before I got there and two years before Dirac came on one of his perennial visits.

Spender's journal entry on his visit is fascinating both for what it says and for what it does not say. He begins by noting that "Oppenheimer lives in a beautiful house, the interior of which is painted almost entirely white." This was the Director's mansion. Spender did not notice that, because of Oppenheimer's western connections, there was also the odd horse on the grounds. He continues: "He has beautiful paintings. As soon as we came in, he said: 'Now is the time to look at the van Gogh.' We went into his sitting room and saw a very fine van Gogh of a sun above a field almost entirely enclosed in shadows." At the end of my first interview with Oppenheimer, immediately after I had driven cross-country from Los Alamos in a convertible with a large hole in the roof and had been summoned to the interview while still covered in grime, he said to me that he and his wife had some pictures I might like to look at sometime. I wondered what he was talking about. Some months later I was invited to a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

party at the Oppenheimer's and realized that he was talking about a van Gogh. Some years later, I learned that this was part of a small collection he had inherited from his father to which he had never added.

A few days after Oppenheimer's funeral in 1967, I was at the Pilates gymnasium in New York where George Balanchine was also a client. I had noticed that Balanchine was listed on the funeral program as having selected the music for it. I said to Balanchine that I didn't realize that he was a friend of Oppenheimer's. Balanchine said that he wasn't, but that a few days before Oppenheimer's death he had been invited to Princeton where he and Oppenheimer, who knew that he was dying, discussed the music to be played: Requiem Canticles by Stravinsky and Op.131—the quartet in C Sharp Minor by Beethoven—at the funeral. Balanchine was at a loss to explain this incident. I recall telling him about the van Gogh.

In his journal entry, Spender describes Oppenheimer's physical appearance: "Robert Oppenheimer is one of the most extraordinary-looking men I have ever seen. He has a head like that of a very small intelligent boy, with a long back to it, reminding one of those skulls which were specially elongated by the Egyptians. His skull gives an almost egg-shell impression of fragility, and is supported by a very thin neck. His expression is radiant and at the same time ascetic." Much of this description seems right to me except that it leaves out the fact that Oppenheimer did have the sun-wrinkled look of someone who had spent a great deal of time out-of-doors, which he had. He also does not seem to have remarked on Oppenheimer's eyes, which had a kind of wary luminescence. Siamese cats make a similar impression. But more important, Oppenheimer appears in Spender's journal as a disembodied figure with no contextual relevance to Spender's own life.

There is no comment about the fact that, three years earlier, Oppenheimer had been "tried" for disloyalty to this country and that his clearance had been taken away. One of the charges brought against him was that his wife, Katherine Puening Oppenheimer, was the former wife of Joseph Dallet, who had been a member of the Communist Party and who had been killed in 1937 fighting for the Spanish Republican Army. In 1937, Spender was also a member of the Communist Party in Britain and had also spent time in Spain. Did Oppenheimer know this? He usually knew most things about the people who interested him. Did "Kitty" Oppenheimer know it? Did this have anything to do with the fact that, during Spender's visit, she was upstairs "ill"? Spender offers no comment. What was he thinking? There were so many things the two of them might have said to each other, but didn't. They talked about the invasion of the Suez Canal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The next year, my first year at the Institute for Advanced Study, Auden also came for a brief visit. There was a small lunch in the Institute cafeteria—no van Gogh for Auden—at which Oppenheimer presided. I have an indelible memory of Oppenheimer telling Auden some fairly pointless anecdote about learning Sanskrit. Auden's unkempt face had a look of inscrutable bemusement.

In the fall of my second year at the Institute, Dirac came for a visit. We all knew that he was coming, but no one had actually encountered him, despite rumored sightings. By this time, Dirac, who was in his mid-fifties, had a somewhat curious role in physics. Unlike Einstein, he had kept up with many of the developments and indeed from time to time commented on them. But, like Einstein, he had no school or following and had produced very few students. He had essentially no collaborators and once, when asked about this, had remarked that "the really good ideas in physics are had by only one person." That seems to apply to poetry as well. He taught his classes in the quantum theory at Cambridge University, where he held Newton's Lucasian chair, by, literally, reading in his precise clipped way from his great text on the subject. When this was remarked on, he replied that he had given the subject a good deal of thought and that there was no better way to present it.

At the Institute we had a weekly physics seminar over which Oppenheimer presided, often interrupting the speaker. Early in the fall we were in the midst of one of these—there were about forty people in attendance in a rather small room—when the door opened. In walked Dirac. I had never seen him before, but I had often seen pictures of him. The real thing was much better. He wore much of a blue suit—trousers, shirt, tie, and, as I recall, a sweater—but what made an indelible impression were the thigh-length muddy rubber boots. It turned out that he was spending a good deal of time in the woods near the Institute with an ax, chopping a path in the general direction of Trenton. Some years later, when I had begun writing for *The New Yorker* and attempted a profile of Dirac, he suggested that we might conduct some of the sessions while clearing this path. He was apparently still working on it.

The profile was never written, since eventually Dirac decided that he didn't want to be bothered, but one thing remains with me. He told me that his habit of silence began in his childhood, when his father insisted that the family speak French at table. Since Dirac did not know much French, he remained silent and continued to do so. But here he was, muddy boots and all, in the middle of our seminar, his graying hair somewhat tousled by his efforts in the woods. Oppenheimer found him a seat. He sat down and looked around at all

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of us with a faint smile. A colleague sitting next to me whispered in my ear, in an imitation of Dirac's voice, a variant of that line from the old British joke, "Is this what the common people call physics?" I think we all felt a little silly. I don't know how Oppenheimer felt.

Now it is some twenty-five years later. The sun has not yet come up, and I am driving across the state of New Jersey with my companion. We have left New York at about 5:00 A.M. so that I will arrive in time for a midmorning lecture. I have cobbled something together about physics and writing. Neither of us has had a proper breakfast. As we go through the Lincoln Tunnel I recall an anecdote my Nobelist colleague T. D. Lee once told me about Dirac. He was driving him from New York to Princeton through this same tunnel. Sometime after they had passed it, Dirac interrupted his silence to remark that, on the average, about as much money would be collected in tolls if they doubled the toll and had tollbooths only at one end. A few years later the Port Authority seems to have made the same analysis and halved the number of tollbooths. We pass the turnoff that would have taken us to Princeton. It is tempting to pay a visit. But Oppenheimer is by then dead and Dirac living in Florida with his wife, the sister of fellow physicist Eugene Wigner. Dirac used to introduce her to people as Wigner's sister, as in "I would like you to meet Wigner's sister." Dirac died in Florida in 1984.

We arrived at the conference center a few minutes before my lecture was scheduled to begin. There was no one, or almost no one, in the lecture room. However, in midroom, there was Spender. I recognized him at once from his pictures. Christopher Isherwood once described Spender's eyes as having the "violent color of blue-bells." Spender was wearing a dark blue suit and one of those striped British shirts—Turnbull and Asser?—the mere wearing of which makes one feel instantly better. He had on a club tie of some sort. He said nothing during my lecture and left as soon as it was over, along with the minuscule audience that I had traveled five hours by car to address. My companion and I then had a mediocre lunch in one of the local coffee shops. There seemed to be no official lunch. I was now thoroughly out of sorts and was ready to return to New York, but she wanted very much to stay for at least part of Spender's poetry workshop, and so we did.

I had never been to a poetry workshop and couldn't imagine what one would consist of. I had been to plenty of physics workshops and knew only too well what *they* consisted of: six physicists in a room with a blackboard shouting at one another. The room where Spender was to conduct his workshop was full, containing perhaps thirty people. One probably should not read too much into appearances, but these

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people—mostly women—looked to me as if they were clinging to poetry as if it were some sort of life raft. If I had had access to Spender's journals (they came out a few years later), I would have realized that he was very used to all of this. In fact, he had been earning his living since his retirement from University College in London a decade earlier by doing lectures and classes for groups like this. I would also have realized that by 1981 he was pretty tired of it, and pretty tired of being an avatar for his now-dead friends—Auden, C. Day Lewis, and the rest. He had outlived them all, but was still under their shadow—especially that of Auden, whom he had first met at Oxford at about the same age and same time that Oppenheimer had met Dirac.

Spender walked in with a stack of poems written by the workshop members. He gave no opening statement, but began reading student poems. I was surprised by how awful they were. Most seemed to be lists: "sky, sex, sea, earth, red, green, blue," and so forth. Spender gave no clue about what he thought of them. Every once in a while he would interrupt his reading and seek out the author and ask such a question as, "Why did you choose red there rather than green? What does red mean to you?" He seemed to be on autopilot.

It is a pity that there are no entries in Spender's *Journal* for this precise period. But it is clear that he was leading a rich social life at the time: dinner with Jacqueline Onassis one day, the Rothschild's at Mouton a week later—the works. My feeling was that whatever he was thinking of had little to do with this workshop. Somehow, I was getting increasingly annoyed. It was none of my business, I guess, but I had put in a long day, and I felt that Spender owed us more. I didn't know what—but more.

My companion must have sensed that I was about to do something because she began writing furiously in a large notebook that she had brought along. Finally, after one particularly egregious "list," I raised my hand. Spender looked surprised, but he called on me. "Why was that a poem?" I asked. In reading his *Journals* years later, I saw that this was a question that he had been asked by students several times and had never come up with an answer that really satisfied him. In 1935, Auden wrote an introduction for an anthology of poetry for schoolchildren in which he defined poetry as "memorable speech." That sounds good until one asks, Memorable to whom? Doesn't it matter? If not, why a workshop?

I can't remember what Spender answered, but I then told him that, when I was a student, I had heard T. S. Eliot lecture. After the lecture one of the students in the audience asked Eliot what he thought the most beautiful line in the English language was—an insane question,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

really, like asking for the largest number. Much to my amazement Eliot answered without the slightest hesitation, "But look, the morn in russet mantle clad / Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill." I asked Spender what he thought the most beautiful line in the English language was. He got up from his chair and in a firm hand wrote a line of Auden's on the blackboard. He looked at it with an expression that I have never forgotten—sadness, wonder, regret, perhaps envy. He recited it slowly and then sat back down. There was total silence in the room. I thanked him, and my companion and I left the class.

I had not thought of all of this for many years, but recently, for some reason, it all came back to me, nearly. I remembered everything except the line that Spender wrote on the blackboard. All that I could remember for certain was that it had to do with the Moon—somehow the Moon. My companion of fifteen years ago is my companion no longer, so I could not ask her. I am a compulsive collector of data from my past, mostly in the form of items that were once useful for tax preparation. Perhaps I had saved the program of the conference with the line written down on it. I looked in the envelopes for 1981 and could find no trace of this trip. Then I had an idea—lunatic, lunar, perhaps. I would look through Auden's collected poems and seek out every line having to do with the Moon to see if it jogged my memory. One thing that struck me, once I started this task, was that there are surprisingly few references to the Moon in these poems. In a collection of eight hundred and ninety-seven pages, I doubt if there are twenty. From *Moon Landing* there is "Unsmudged, thank God, my Moon still queens the Heavens as she ebbs and fulls . . ." or from *The Age of Anxiety*, "Mild, unmilitant, as the moon rose / And reeds rustled . . ." or from "Nocturne," "Appearing unannounced, the moon / Avoids a mountain's jagged prongs / And sweeps into the open sky / Like one who knows where she belongs"—all wonderful lines, but not what I remembered. The closest was, "White hangs the waning moon / A scruple in the sky . . ." also from *The Age of Anxiety*. This still didn't seem right.

Then I got an idea. I would re-read Spender's *Journals* to see if he mentions a line in Auden's poetry that refers to the Moon. In the entry for the sixth of February 1975, I found this: "It would not be very difficult to imitate the late Auden. [He had died in 1973.] For in his late poetry there is a rather crotchety persona into whose carpet slippers some ambitious young man with a technique as accomplished could slip. But it would be very difficult to imitate the early Auden. "This lunar beauty / Has no history, / Is complete and early. . . ." This, I am sure of it now, is the line that Spender wrote on the blackboard that afternoon in 1981.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poor Stephen Spender, poor Robert Oppenheimer, each limited, if not relegated, to the category of the merely very good, and each inevitably saddened by his knowledge of what was truly superior. "Being a minor poet is like being a minor royalty," Spender wrote in his *Journal*, "and no one, as a former lady-in-waiting to Princess Margaret once explained to me, is happy as that." As for Oppenheimer, I recall Isadore Rabi once telling me that "if he had studied the Talmud and Hebrew, rather than Sanskrit, he [Oppenheimer] would have been a much greater physicist. I never ran into anyone who was brighter than he was. But to be more original and profound I think you have to be more focussed."

As Spender says, W. H. Auden's poetry cannot be imitated, any more than Paul Dirac's physics can be. That is what great poetry and great physics have in common: both are swept along by the tide of unanticipated genius as it rushes past the merely very good.

Robert Nisbet

1913–1996

Editorial Board Member and Contributor,

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

1974–1980

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Liberty Print

(For my sister)

A. V. Christie

Under the abiding lamp, appearances and disappearances;
the needle shines: up through the billow of pale hydrangea,
back down into daphne,
small strawberry blossoms,
beneath the fragile green.

This fine cotton is tired and thin.
Each time I wear the blouse the strain pulls at the twilit wild rose
and morning glories fray along their immaculate edges.

You brought the Liberty cotton home
from your year at the Sorbonne, folded sharp-cornered
like handkerchiefs in your suitcase, to make each of us a blouse.

You spread the flawless cloth out on the table,
a rustle as you pinned the tissue pattern pieces down.

Yours also floral, warm-hued with slight yellows.

Mine was this fluctuation of lavender, half-sky and green
with a deep blue intruding from the background like a stain,
an afterthought.

You told me then as the shears hissed
how one evening in the café you'd tried to ask a man
when the Eiffel Tower's lights might come on. *A quelle heure
la tour s'allume?* you'd said.
When would it be lit on fire?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This was long before we knew of danger,
of the small and tragic shifts in innocence and ignorance.

The pattern was easy to follow;
the pins shone, a cheerful path into the light.

. . .

The light shines in the eye of the needle I thread once again
to mend the frail seams ill-worn by a day's reaching.

I begin near the shoulder seam, the dark blue here
like a shadow, like midnight.

The lamp illuminates the patient stitches,
loops of purple thread, a collar pressed still
to its precise and thoughtful point.

You were sewing one afternoon—lost in a daydream—
needles and pins sharp from your mouth like a fish's whiskers.
When you swallowed one
we made jokes about how for eternity
you'd set off airport security systems.
We were afraid.

The doctor never found the needle on the X ray.
At any time it could, like some shimmering pickerel, swim
through you, right to your heart.
But it disappeared in a cushion of tissue.

This morning you mentioned the calm,
the woman putting one hundred needles in your skin.
To help the grief, you said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I imagined the needle stirring in you,
thinking it had come finally into the afterlife,
had rejoined a bristling host of the lost
in the quiet of your flesh.

And I thought what it would be like
—you and I, the rest of us—
that moment, seeing again the brother we lost
just a silent year ago.

After we hung up I took out the blouse.
The scissors caught like kindling in the lamplight
as I made the first, long cut
toward the first corner of a handkerchief.

✪ A. V. CHRISTIE's poems have appeared in *Poetry Northwest,* the *Iowa Review,* and other magazines. She teaches at Goucher College and is a Poet-in-the-Schools in Baltimore.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The River and the Road

Fashions in Forgiveness

CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK

When Lionel Trilling collected the essays that became *The Liberal Imagination*, was it chance or subliminal recognition of affinity that caused him to place his discussions of *Huckleberry Finn* and of Kipling side by side? Five years separated the essays—that on Kipling written in 1943, in response to the then recent essays by Edmund Wilson and T. S. Eliot ("critical attention . . . friendlier and more interesting than any he has received for a long time"), that on *Huckleberry Finn* in 1948. No interior references united them. If Trilling remembered *Kim* (Kipling's "best book" he'd called it in a long and appreciative paragraph) when he identified *Huck Finn* as a "picaresque novel, or novel of the road" and quoted Pascal's "rivers are roads that move," he did not say so.

Kim, of course, is also about a road, a road that one of its own characters compares to a river. And on that road journey a boy and a man, separated by race and culture, bonded by love. The end of that journey, too, is problematic, a betrayal, Wilson had called it, of the complex relationship that made the book so much more than a boy's adventure story. No wonder that Christopher Clausen, writing in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, remarks that "a persuasive case can be made for studying" the two novels "together, rather than as the products of two presumably discrete traditions."

Yet far from being studied together, the novels have only rarely and fleetingly been associated. Eliot, though he wrote important essays on both books, did not link them. *Huckleberry Finn* had been around for forty-eight years, *Kim* for over thirty, before anyone noticed in print that the novels might have something in common. An occasional critic, in an isolated phrase, might suggest a connection between their

✪ CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK teaches at Williams College and is the author of *Rejoining the Common Reader* and *The Siege: The First Eight Years of an Autistic Child.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

authors. William Lyon Phelps in 1910 had seen in Kipling a debt to Twain's "deliberate, enormous hyperbole"; in 1926 Brander Matthews recalled *Tom Sawyer* as he wrote of a book in which "Kipling recovers the days of his youth." But Phelps was thinking of Kipling's farcical "Brugglesmith," Matthews of the schoolboys of *Stalky and Co.* Kim and Huck remained unmentioned. It was not until 1932 that Bernard De Voto dropped into his polemic with Van Wyck Brooks a first notice of *Huck*'s affinity with *Kim.* He accorded it a full sentence. *Huckleberry Finn* "is the story of a wandering—so provocative a symbol that it moved Rudyard Kipling to discover another sagacious boy beneath a cannon and conduct him down an endless road"—"an enterprise," he added, "that fell enormously short of its model."

Seventeen years later the English critic J. M. F. Tompkins devoted three searching pages of a book on Kipling's art to these two "picaresque narratives, with boys as travellers, sweeping in the characteristic scenes and figures, opinions and superstitions of a particular society at a particular time." I know of no more extensive treatment. Though comparisons have recently begun to proliferate as interest in the literature of colonialism mounts, they are confined to partial sentences and glancing suggestions. Kim and Huck are alike in "trying to evade the clamp of civilization," notes Irving Howe. To Daniel Bivona the lama's river suggests a Heraclitean Mississippi. S. P. Mohanty finds Kim's relationship with the lama "culturally vacuous" compared with Huck's with Jim, though both boys learn "to value the hardships of an unsheltered life over the privileges of 'sivilization.'" In his extensive discussion of *Kim,* Edward Said, tracing the genealogy of novels that celebrate "the friendship of two men in a difficult, and sometimes hostile, environment," remarks parenthetically that "*Huckleberry Finn, Moby Dick,* and *The Deerslayer* come quickly to mind" but leaves it at that. All of these are in contexts where Kipling, not Twain, is the focus of attention. Although in the astonishing volume of critical writing on *Huckleberry Finn* there must somewhere be a reference after De Voto's, I have not found it.

Today, with *Huck Finn* present, or controversially absent, in every American high school, and scarcely a book in the exploding number of studies of imperialism, colonial literatures, and "orientalism" that leaves *Kim* undiscussed, it seems not only time to make the connection but extraordinary that anyone could have overlooked it. Clausen explains this by "the continuing power of cultural nationalism," the rigid division of English-department curricula between American and British literature that "tend[s] to define the specialties of literary scholars." He is certainly right, as my meager American harvest shows. But there are other reasons, less parochial—or parochial in a different way.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The thing is, Kipling simply isn't as *important* as Twain. In academic language, *Kim* isn't in anybody's canon. Comparability here is not a function of theme, of treatment, of authorly preoccupations, of imaginative power, of readerly pleasure or admiration; it is a function of status.

Though academics confer status, the status of *Huckleberry Finn* is more than academic. The very day that Twain began it is "momentous in the history of American literature." It is not only "the great American novel," wrote Phelps, "it is America." Mencken went further: it is "perhaps the greatest novel ever written in English." And there's Hemingway's judgment, endlessly quoted: "All modern American literature comes from one book called *Huckleberry Finn*. . . . There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since." In the words of a popular literary pundit of the forties, Clifton Fadiman, Mark Twain is "our Chaucer, our Homer, our Dante, our Vergil." In forty more years, a *Washington Post* editorialist would call *Huck Finn* "the Sistine Chapel of our civilization."

American or English, academic or common reader, no one talks like that about *Kim.* Something deeper than academic compartmentalization underlies such torrid pronouncements. The rhetoric of cultural nationalism is the rhetoric of national need. As once they needed epics, national literatures now need great originary novels. American literature needs *Huck Finn* as British literature does not and cannot need *Kim.* "The great British novel"—the absurdity of the phrase bespeaks the disparity of the cultural need between a young nation and an old one that takes its status for granted.

Yet even if the British had yearned for the coming of a great novel, one that should profoundly tell them who they imagined themselves to be, it could not have been *Kim.* An adolescent America might recognize its mythical self-image in a book for boys, telling the story of a boy's escape from "sivilization." England could not. *Huckleberry Finn* could be felt as central to American experience, psychologically, thematically, even geographically. To English experience, *Kim* could only be peripheral; part of its charm was that in each of these ways it was as far from England as could be imagined. It was not even, as *A Passage to India* would be, about the English in India. Its few British characters, though they have their importance to the plot, are as alien to the book's emotional center as the Widow and Aunt Sally are to Huck's relationship with Jim. *Kim* is overwhelmingly a novel about India—"The Finest Story about India," N. C. Chaudhuri called it in 1957, ten years after independence, and when he added "—in English" to the title of his essay, it was a statement, not a qualification. But there was a greater obstacle than genre or locale to according *Kim* a status that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could invite, or even admit, comparison with Twain's novel. By mid-century, what Trilling called Kipling's "mindless imperialism" had become notorious. Kipling had won the Nobel Prize in 1907, but in the years in which *Huckleberry Finn* was becoming America's Sistine Chapel—and India was struggling toward independence—his reputation steadily sank. Auden might write in 1938 that Time that "worships language" had pardoned "Kipling and his views"—pardoned him "for writing well." But Time was in no such hurry to absolve. Through the thirties, the forties, the fifties, the sixties, Kipling's reputation resisted rehabilitation with extraordinary tenacity. And not only rehabilitation; it resisted any attempt to take his work seriously. Auden tried. Edmund Wilson tried. T. S. Eliot tried. Lionel Trilling tried. Randall Jarrell tried. To no avail. Kipling had written well enough to burn "the White Man's Burden" into the English-speaking memory, and for three generations that phrase was beyond pardon. However deeply—or finely—*Kim* might be about India, it was wholly at home with empire. Certainly the imperial voice was less strident in this novel, conceived in Vermont and completed in England, than in earlier stories by Kipling. Yet it was still audible, and that was enough. A book wholly at home with empire could not be a great novel.

Time passes, however. Trilling might write in 1943 that "Indians naturally have no patience with Kipling," but it is Indians, former Indians, and others whose anti-imperialist credentials are impeccable who now take Kipling very seriously indeed. Not only Chaudhuri, but Sara Suleri, S. P. Mohanty, Zohreh T. Sullivan, K. R. S. Iyengar, V. A. Shahane, Salman Rushdie, and Edward Said are ready to examine, to challenge, to praise, even, in varying degrees, to pardon. *Kim*, like *Huckleberry Finn*, has never been out of print. But in the last ten years it has become available in paperback in Twentieth Century Classics (Penguin), The World Classics (Oxford), and Bantam publications; a Norton Critical Edition inches toward publication. An irresistible comparison need no longer be resisted.

Kipling and Twain, after all, were not merely contemporaries. They were profoundly aware of each other—acquaintances and mutual admirers long before 1907, when Lord Curzon conferred on each of them Oxford's honorary degree. Kipling was a schoolboy in England when he read Tom Sawyer's adventures. In 1888, at twenty-two, he was quoting *Huckleberry Finn* from memory, though he'd been six years in India and the book had been published only three years before. In 1889 he would return to England—via San Francisco, whence he would make his way to Elmira, New York, to seek out "this man I had learned to love and admire fourteen thousand miles away." Naturally Twain had never heard of the young unknown; Kipling's stories had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not yet appeared outside India. Yet the meeting was memorable for both. Kipling sent a reverential account of it to his Indian newspaper; years later, Twain would record his memory of it in his autobiography.

Inside a year Kipling was unknown no longer. Already in 1890 Twain was reading "my splendid Kipling," and writing a friend that his stories, "plenty good enough on a first reading," were even better on a second. By 1895 the two most famous—and most popular—authors in the world were on familiar enough terms for Twain, with typical brio, to alert Kipling to his upcoming India trip; he would arrive "riding my ayah with his tusks adorned with silver bells and ribbons and escorted by a troop of native howdahs richly clad and mounted upon a herd of wild bungalows." Letters and occasional visits kept up the friendship. In 1903, when F. N. Doubleday told Twain that Kipling had called him "the great and godlike Clemens," his response was that he "would rather see [Kipling] than any other man."

It's no wonder they found each other congenial. I cannot think of two writers in English who had more reasons to understand each other. Both had begun as inkstained working journalists. Both became popular almost as soon as they began to publish—immensely, internationally, and (it now seems) permanently. Both were geographical and cultural outsiders: Kipling formed by India, where he was born, to which he returned for his most formative years; Twain a raucous voice from far beyond the Hudson. They were academic outsiders as well. Twain was out of school and earning his living at thirteen, Kipling at sixteen, and both kept from that experience a lifelong commitment to "the day's work" and the kind of people that performed it. Both had an extraordinary ear for hearing and a talent for rendering their various voices, "not," as Twain proudly explained in his introductory note to *Huckleberry Finn*, "in a hap-hazard fashion, or by guess-work; but painstakingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech." Out of their working experience, too, came their respect for machines. "Engines and screws," Henry James regretfully called it—speaking of Kipling. Speaking of Twain, Van Wyck Brooks remarked that "his enthusiasm for literature was as nothing beside his enthusiasm for machines," and deplored his "ingrained contempt for the creative life as against the life of sagacious action," "for the word as against the deed."

One could make something of an anthology of such unrelated, but virtually reversible critical dicta. "The vernacular style . . . has been peculiarly useful in expressing a preoccupation with process, with the way things are done," noted Leo Marx. He was talking about Twain; he could have said the same of Kipling. Reversible, too, is his acute comment on "the chief defect of the vernacular mode—its unremitting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anti-intellectualism." When intellect counterattacks, it is on similar grounds. Thus Brooks complains that about philosophy or history "one would say that Mark Twain had never thought at all," while Noel Annan must defend Kipling from the often-made "charge that he has no mind." Kipling, too, is called, as Brooks called Twain, "a victim of arrested development." When the same things are said less pejoratively, they are equally reversible. For De Voto, Twain was an artist who preferred "experience to metaphysical abstractions and the thing to its symbol." For T. S. Eliot, Kipling was "an intuitive rather than an intellectual," his mind not "gifted for abstract thought."

Out of such affinities grew two extraordinary novels, each described by successive critics as the only successful novel its author achieved—his masterpiece, his one great book. Like their authors, the books generate reversible judgments, arising from one, equally applicable to the other. When Trilling speaks of a novel, part of whose greatness "is that it succeeds as a boys' book," which read at ten "and then annually thereafter" is each year "as fresh as the year before, . . . changed only in growing somewhat larger," he is of course talking about *Huck Finn.* But when he tells us that "to a middle-class boy he gave a literary sanction for the admiration of the illiterate and shiftless part of humanity," he is talking about Kipling, about *Kim.* It hardly seems to matter which book is called "idyllic" or "pastoral," the adjectives are so frequent, or which is praised for its command of vernacular voices. So, too, with "episodic" and "picaresque." And these are only the most obvious of the parallels.

Such similarities might seem to suggest direct influence. Twain himself saw none, though he read *Kim* every year and admired it as much as he admired Kipling, whose "name and . . . words stir me more than any other living man's." He thought it "worth the journey to India to qualify myself to read *Kim* understandingly and to realize how great a book it is." Yet this tribute, written five years after *Kim*'s publication and four years before Twain's death, contains no suggestion that Kim brought Huck to mind. And Kipling, so much younger, so much aware of himself as a writer? Did he recognize between river and road, between Huck and Kim, between Jim and Teshoo Lama, a kinship he might gracefully have acknowledged? I doubt it. For among the similarities are entwined such differences as might well overwhelm conscious or unconscious recognition of affinity, differences that ensure that each book remains triumphantly itself.

That both Twain and Kipling wrote children's books that adults continue to explore is a similarity at once obvious and deep. The ability—and the need—to access the far shore of childhood, to reenter and to actualize a remembered Eden, is central to the creation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of these novels as to no others I can name, and it is not children but adults to whom this return has meaning. *Huck* and *Kim* take their imaginative intensity from a boyhood to which their creators could return only in dreams. Prisoners of success—including successful marriages—and perhaps for that very reason, they kept intact their vision of a paradise both past and real. Twain did not take his wife or children back to Missouri; they lived grandly and expensively in New York and Connecticut, and later, less expensively but still grandly, in the grander cities of Europe. Kipling did not take his family to India, though the Kiplings traveled widely and for years wintered in South Africa. Nor did he go back himself. Yet in the autobiography he wrote in his seventieth year, forty-four years after he had seen India for the last time, the idyll returns in a rush of remembrance: "daybreak, light and colour and golden and purple fruits at the level of my shoulder," visits to "little Hindu temples where, being below the age of caste," he "looked at the dimly-seen, friendly Gods" as he held a beloved Indian hand.

Huck's idyll is very different from Kim's, not least in its duration. "It's lovely to live on a raft," with "everybody . . . satisfied" and "feel[ing] right and kind toward the others," but all told the loveliness lasts less than three weeks. As Huck and Jim drift naked down the river, their paradise is as temporary, and as isolated, as Eden itself. The incursions of a violent and unjust society shatter the dream of human fellowship, as the steamboat literally wrecks the raft. The raft will be recovered and repaired, but after that there will be only "two or three days" more to slide along "so quiet and smooth and lovely." Once the Duke and the King come aboard, idyll gives place to boisterous farce, and paradise is lost for good.

Its perfection is *dependent* on its isolation, as Huck's state of innocence is dependent on his status as a moral and social outsider. To keep his integrity he must remain one; he does not and cannot. Twain advertised him on the title page as "Tom Sawyer's Comrade." Once back on shore, Tom's world and Tom's values claim him, and the moral idyll is forgotten. Huck may speak up, amusingly if feebly, for common sense against Tom's romantic tricks, but he doesn't speak up for Jim. To reclaim the innocence Twain has insouciantly forfeited, we must steadfastly misread Huck's famous lighting out for the territory. We must, and, out of the intensity of our need, most of us do, ignoring not only the hint that Huck will be only a little "ahead of the others," but the explicit witness of such sequels as *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, where Huck, returned to St. Petersburg, continues as Tom Sawyer's loyal subordinate and Jim is in blackface forever.

The idyll of Kim and Teshoo Lama, however, is hardy enough to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

last out the book. Their journeyings, though interrupted by Kim's "sivilizing" stints in school (where, like Huck, he wears uncomfortable clothes but learns some useful things), cover three full years, in which Kim has time to grow as Huck cannot. And unlike Huck's and Jim's idyll, secure in an isolation in which "nothing ever happened," Kim's paradise is one of human bustle and noise and continuing event. Unlike the river, or the barely mentioned "territory," India is *peopled*, various and rich with human beings, their languages, religions, their social rules and assumptions. The Grand Trunk Road is "as a river," on which move "all castes and kinds of men . . . Brahmins and chumars, bankers and tinkers, barbers and bunnias, pilgrims and potters—all the world coming and going," as social as Huck's actual river is solitary. Kim swims in society. He, like Huck, is fatherless and motherless, socially marginal, even Irish. Yet he is the ultimate insider, at home everywhere and with everyone, the "Little Friend of All the World." Far from depending on isolation, his relationship with Teshoo Lama is social from the outset, beginning in a boy's social curiosity ("He is new") and continuing in a boy's expertise, the street smarts that mediate between the Holy One's spirituality and the rich practicalities of the world.

And the world in *Kim* is not violent but benign. In that respect Kipling's is far more a boy's book than Twain's, though in other ways it is far less so. To reread *Huckleberry Finn* as an adult is to experience a society so murderous that only selective memory—and the return of Tom Sawyer—can haze it into the eternal summer of Norman Rockwell boyhood. Huck's father nearly succeeds in killing him. Jim is in continual danger of death. We could list corpses, beginning with Pap's, but with the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons, we'd lose count, and Colonel Sherburn's point-blank shooting of the town drunk still to come. "Human beings *can* be awful cruel to one another," says Huck, oddly enough when the deaths are behind him and it's only a matter of tar and feathers. Yet even in the farcical ending, the lynch mob and the bullets are real.

Whereas in all of *Kim* there is not a single fatality. In Kipling's Eden as in Milton's, death, though alluded to, is suspended. Danger and risk are asserted rather than experienced, and the single act of violence, in which a brutal Russian knocks down the lama and tears his marvelous drawing of the Wheel of Life, would in Huck's harsh world hardly merit the telling. Kipling's earlier stories had been full of the murder and graphic mayhem that come easy to a young reporter—too full, protested Indian critics, to pretend to a realistic rendition of Indian life. Here he makes another choice. We may recognize reasons of genre—Victorian boys' books minimized or excluded outright vio-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lence—unless, of course, they were written by Mark Twain. But in *Kim* the exclusion has deeper roots. This was the beloved country of his childhood, the secure paradise of sensory awareness and human affection from which he'd been exiled when, at five, his parents had left him without explanation in the chill English hell that he to the end of his life would call The House of Desolation. Not English but Hindustani was the vernacular of paradise, the language of songs and stories, of love. In paradise children had to be reminded to "speak English now to Papa and Mama." Writing *Kim* in the "gloomy, windy English autumn," Kipling "had my Eastern sunlight." Here he could regain all he'd lost and more, dreaming a world "below the age of caste" in which a boy, white and yet not white, Indian and yet British, could recognize what Zohreh T. Sullivan calls "the underground Indian child who is always unavoidably within him." Kipling would find a plot that would allow that child to grow out of boyhood, able, by his mastery of language and disguise, to do what, if it had ever been possible, was possible no longer. Though Kim is now sixteen and a sahib, he can enter the temple as the child Ruddy could and find his lama there, and "forgetting his white blood," gladly make the Indian gesture of reverence, stooping to touch his Holy One's feet. "That night he dreamed in Hindustani, with never an English word." Even in imagination, Twain could secure no such fullness of return.

Kim is, as Edward Said points out, "an overwhelmingly male novel"—another doubly applicable critical perception. Idylls written, if not only for boys still with boys in mind, are likely to be. De Voto invites another double application, noting that Twain "could create women of only a certain age and class." Yet crucial differences must qualify both judgments. Both Twain and Kipling are at home with older women, good cooks who can at need nurse back to health the sick or injured male. But the aunts and widows of *Huckleberry Finn* represent a sivilization not only misspelled but sentimentalized, a civilization (as De Voto notes) that excludes sex. It's a familiar picture. In age, the female is nurturing and prone to tears; in youth, if worthy of male attention, she is prone to tears, beautiful, and in need of male protection. Mary Jane Wilks is "sweet and lovely" and makes Huck's heart swell up like to bust, but at nineteen she is no more to be apprehended sexually than Tom Sawyer's Becky Thatcher.

But as there's more violence in *Huck* than fits an idyll, there's more sex in *Kim* than fits a boys' book—certainly one published in 1901. Though the old woman from Kulu nurses Kim as Aunt Sally nurses the wounded Tom, her inventive curses and cheerful sexual innuendos are more likely to recall the Wife of Bath than any female in *Huckleberry Finn.* Huck's puppyish attachment to Mary Jane would touch

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Victorian readers and perhaps convince them; Kim's expertise with helpful prostitutes made one contemporary reviewer wish for a "cleaner" hero. And there is his encounter with the Woman of Shamlegh,* up in the polyandrous hills. "No common bearer of babes," as she proudly tells Kim, this masterful woman who gives the orders in her village and holds it directly from the Rajah makes Kim an offer inconceivable for Mary Jane. If he refuses, it is not because he does not understand its nature, though few of Kipling's child readers would have done so. Kim has known about sex "since he could speak"; Huck, so familiar with violence, seems never to have heard of it.

The confident, self-defined women of *Kim* are in need of no man's protection—or boy's. On the contrary, they control the episodes that contain them, and those episodes are crucial to the novel. *Huckleberry Finn* could do without Mary Jane, and one Aunt Sally is much like another. In contrast, the unsentimental realism with which Kipling treats his female characters allows us to take them seriously. (I know a traveler in the Himalayan foothills who not long ago received—and like Kim refused—just such an invitation in just such a place from just such a woman.) Because we can take them seriously, Kipling can use them for serious purposes. Women not only provide a protective setting for the novel's concluding episodes but contribute significantly to the defining of its major themes. The Woman of Shamlegh marks a significant stage on Kim's journey to maturity. Mary Jane can only cement Huck's eternal boyhood. She is merely another installment in a novel Hemingway famously advised us not to finish, a novel whose author just as famously warned its readers that "persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot."

Kipling too called *Kim* "picaresque and plotless"; he told his mother that "what was good enough for Cervantes was good enough for him." This looks at first like another reversible judgment, but the similarity dissolves on inspection. *Huckleberry Finn* is indeed a series of "adventures," as its title indicates. Sometimes they include Jim; more often he is absent or disastrously peripheral. Teshoo Lama appears in thirteen of Kim's fifteen chapters; he is never long out of Kim's consciousness or ours. Structurally, there is no doubt about what is the novel's center: spatially, the Road (as Huck's River is not, however much we wish it to be); intellectually, psychologically, and humanly, the relationship of Kim and the lama, a relationship that guides the novel from its beginning to its tender and ambiguous end.

*Those who pick up Kipling's carefully planted clues will recognize her as the touching "Lispeth," abandoned by her English lover in the story that opens *Plain Tales from the Hills*, and reflect that Kipling was capable at least once of representing the encounter of native and Englishman as devasting rather than benign.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As Said has pointed out, *Kim* is both bildungsroman and quest story. For the lama, it is a quest for release from the Wheel of Being; for Kim a discovery—and creation—of his true identity. Who, what is Kim? By the novel's end, the road will have brought a resourceful boy to the threshold of effective manhood—in his own terms. The lama will—in his own terms—have found his own River, the River of Lord Buddha's Arrow; he will have achieved salvation "for himself and his beloved." Kipling, having centered his novel on two antithetical figures, young and old, white and colored, worldly and spiritual, can now use the two concluding episodes, each made possible by a woman, to bring their separate quests to a single close. At Shamlegh, the two seemingly irreconcilable plotlines coalesce. At Kulu they are brought to conclusion, a conclusion that at once ensures the novel's artistic coherence and challenges us with questions neither Kipling nor we can answer.

At Shamlegh, the Woman, though a bitter skeptic in matters of religion (readers who remember "Lispeth" will know why), will provide the necessary litter for the weakened lama and order her husbands to carry him to what will prove to be the end point of his quest. At Shamlegh, too, Kim's defense of the lama will enable his full entry into the Great Game as he takes possession of the maps of the Russian spies and throws their surveying instruments into bottomless space. In this climactic episode, he justifies the years of education that have converted a clever street urchin into an effective agent of British intelligence.

Though this is exactly the outcome we have found so difficult to pardon, in the novel's own terms—Said is unquestionably right on this—it is a triumph. Sivilization could promise Huck and Jim no such protective order as Kipling saw in his idealized British Raj, the Raj of bridges and railroads, engines and screws, the benign and active guarantor of an enlightened justice that should understand and respect the multiform beliefs and differences of the governed, their civilization, properly spelled—everything but their ability to govern themselves.

And yet, are the novel's terms so simple? In one of the verses Kipling liked to affix to his chapters, he—or is it Kim?—gives ecumenical thanks to God (for he knew quite well the meaning of "Allah") "who gave me two / Separate sides to my head." Two sides. English and Indian. Game and quest, and a quest is not a game. In this bildungsroman in which (Said again) "he has graduated from one brilliant success to another," there is another kind of education for Kim, not complementary to, but radically at odds with, the first, a kind of education that puts the very concept of success in question. At

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shamlegh, Kipling brings to its sharpest concentration the conflict that defines the novel.

Brilliantly double, the episode that is a triumph for Kim is for the lama a Dark Night of the Soul. The detour that has taken him back from the plains to his beloved hills—and Kim more deeply into the Game—has tempted him from his quest, back into the illusory world of desire and anger. At Shamlegh, the lama articulates most fully the Way he has tried to teach Kim and confronts its most difficult challenge. "All the long night," "torn and wrenched beyond a thousand blows," he traces "the running grass-roots of evil." Fifty years past, monk or no monk, the lama was a fighter. He still bears the scar. Now, though the Russian's blow "was but a shadow on a shadow," it struck with all the power of illusion. "Evil in itself . . . it met evil in me, anger, rage, and lust to return evil." More: returned to the hills, the old man had exulted, gloried in his endurance, "desired strong slopes to climb." The attack, the tearing of the sacred Wheel of Life, "was a sign to me, who am no better than a strayed yak, that my place is not here. . . . 'Back to the path,' says the Blow. 'The Hills are not for thee. Thou canst not choose Freedom and go in bondage to the delight of life.'" "Just is the Wheel. . . . Learn the lesson, *chela.*" It is not the lesson of Kim's Western education.

Kim mutters what we may take as a Western response—or perhaps it is merely a natural one. It is certainly truthful. The lesson "is too high for me. . . . I am glad I hurt the man." Reject force? Kim is a boy, and boys are likely to return blow for blow. He is an agent of government—of imperial government—and governments do, perhaps must, use force. Reject the world? The whole novel has celebrated the delight of life.

> The diamond-bright dawn woke men and crows and bullocks together. Kim sat up and yawned, shook himself, and thrilled with delight. . . . This was life as he would have it—bustling and shouting, the buckling of belts, and beating of bullocks and creaking of wheels, lighting of fires and cooking of food, and new sights at every turn of the approving eye.

Edmund Wilson's political reading of the East-West conflict in terms of the Indian independence movement seems transitory and shallow compared with the conflict between the lama's Way and Kim's.

We may see it as a conflict between Eastern quietism and Western activism, but that is too easy. Though Kipling invites such a reading, he pushes us beyond such ready dichotomies. The West has its contemplatives, and not all of them are saints; there is nothing quieter than Huck's and Jim's Mississippi idyll, where every incursion of the active world threatens danger or injustice, and usually both. And

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kim's India is full of men of action (we need only consider Kim's alternative father figure, Mahbub Ali), all of them, in the lama's terms, deeply engrossed in the world, cheerfully and energetically bound on the Wheel.

Men of action, and women too. Like the lama, the Sahiba of Kulu is old. Kipling brought her in near the Road's beginning; here, at its end, he needs her again, and not only for his plot. Certainly she provides a haven for Kim, now ill and exhausted, and the failing lama. But more than any single character except Kim himself, she provides the thematic counterweight to the lama's rejection of the delight of life and the needs of the "stupid body." Her practicality, her vigorous enjoyment, her good food, her healing potions and massage techniques of which, Kipling tells us, Europeans know nothing, carry a heavier weight than Aunt Sally's good grub and tearful care for the wounded Tom. Affirming in age what Kim's alert delight affirms in youth, they define the central conflict that pervades the novel and organizes it.

As Kim teasingly reminds his Holy One, those for whom the world is illusion must depend on the day's work of those for whom it is real. The lama's detachment requires "a *chela* to prepare tea for him, and to fold a blanket for his head, and to chase out calving cows." The Sahiba, with her raunchy jokes and her talkative preoccupation with grandchildren, is a persuasive voice for the tasks and pleasures of the ongoing, fertile world. Like the Rissaldar, the old soldier who jokes with the lama, "the despiser of this world," he who calls children "stumbling blocks upon the Way" yet sings a nursery ditty to comfort a crying baby, she speaks for another kind of river than Lord Buddha's, what the narrator calls "the broad smiling river of life." That the lama finds his own river in her fields, that the novel ends in her compound, confirms and reaffirms its double pull.

But the strongest voice for the delight of life has been implicit throughout—not only the delight in the Road and its color and variety, but the delight in another human being, the one attachment the lama cannot relinquish, his love for his *chela.* It is in this relationship that Kipling's Road differs most from Twain's River. Both, indeed, assert the Edenic possibility of affection in difference. And in both unlikely pairings, that love is a powerful educative instrument, as white boy learns from man of color lessons their creators direct not only to the children for whom the books were ostensibly written but also to the adult world. "Learn the lesson, *chela.*" In *Huckleberry Finn,* this is overwhelmingly a lesson of the heart. The "good heart" Twain gave Huck allows him to discover what clever, heedless Tom will never know. He learns from Jim that blacks love their families just as white

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

folks do. He learns, though he will all too soon forget it, that folks who play humiliating tricks on friends who love them are trash. He learns that he'd go to hell to save Jim, although he doesn't learn why. And since Twain's irony calls upon adult readers to think things through, we learn from the paradisal raft more than Huck can understand, or at least conceptualize, about the dehumanizing of human beings.

Kim, too, has a good heart, but he swims in deeper waters. In *Huckleberry Finn* we know what is right and what is wrong, all the more clearly because a slave-owning society has reversed those terms in the name of Christianity. But it is part of *Kim*'s force that it poses questions to which there can be no answers. We cannot imagine Huck questioning his own identity, as Kim does in his frightened isolation, or choosing to travel as a disciple with a despiser of this world. What Kim absorbs from the lama cannot be what Huck absorbs from Jim. What Huck—and we with him—must learn over and over is that Jim is like us and we like him, all human together; what he does not learn, and we must, is that any system that denies that is simply, unequivocally wrong. What Kim—and we—learn from the lama is the possibility of an alternative, valid, and wholly other way of being.

That a resourceful and sociable boy who is, as the lama notes, "something of a small imp" should be attracted to, of all things, an exemplar of holiness is for the novelist an extraordinary creative choice, a choice, literally and figuratively, halfway round the world from *Huckleberry Finn*. Kipling built that choice into the story from its opening in front of the great Museum of which Kipling's own father was curator, whose astonishing collection of Buddhist sculptures Kipling uses to introduce a novel that, as finely as any in our language, sets out the counterstatement to the values of the imperial West. Who is Kim? What is Kim? What is real and what is illusion? How should life be lived? Huck would not be Huck if he asked such questions.

The waters are deep, and Twain would have found them about as congenial as a bath in the Ganges. When he writes about Benares in *Following the Equator*, it is the river's filth that strikes him, not its holiness, and though he tries to be respectful, he sprays Hinduism with the same corrosive sarcasm—no more, perhaps, but certainly no less—that he accords Christianity. But Kipling has made metaphysical and religious questions integral to the relationship between Kim and Teshoo Lama, and he treats these questions with full seriousness. The relationship between boy and man is of the rare kind that is founded on respect for what the other *is*, and the lama is Kim's Holy One. Edward Said types with Western fingers when he writes that "of course," "there is some mumbo-jumbo" in the lama's final vision of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

soul's escape "beyond the illusion of Time and Space and of Things." It is a vision that Kipling, having two sides to his head, both understands and honors; his presentation of its dimensions is in turn respected by such Indian critics as Iyengar, Shahane, Chaudhuri, and Bhaskar Rao. Kim will not choose that Way—he will recognize that for him, as for the Widow and the Rissaldar, the world is real, roads are "meant to be walked upon, houses to be lived in, cattle to be driven, fields to be tilled, and men and women to be talked to." Yet the lama's voice will be unforgotten. Kipling never discounts his vision, nor can India be experienced—or respected—by discounting it. There must be a sense in which the Holy One's search is fulfilled, his cleansing River more than a mere brook.

Here, at least, Kipling's respect is untainted by the racial condescension that manages, apparently without Twain's noticing it, to transform Jim from a moral teacher to whom Huck can willingly humble himself to the superstitious butt of an elaborate practical joke. Both Jim and the lama have been called childlike by critics, but the lama's innocence is very different from what William Lyon Phelps, secure in the white stereotypes of 1910, could praise as Jim's "peculiar harmlessness." That the lama is unaware that the Western education he paid for prepared his *chela* for a secret-service career, that he knows nothing of the Great Game, is naïve, but it is not foolish. It is no undeveloped intellect that holds that "to help the ignorant to wisdom is always a merit." If the lama is a child in the ways of the world and the Raj, it is because he has spent fifty years in a monastery, not because he is what Kipling calls an "Oriental."

The novel's Orientals—Hurree Babu, Mahbub Ali, and a host of others—are neither childlike nor naïve. And it is no reverent native but Kipling's own narrative voice that offers us the lama "as a scholar removed from vanity, as a Seeker walking in humility, as an old man, wise and temperate, illuminating knowledge with brilliant insight, . . . till Kim, who had loved him without reason, now loved him for fifty good reasons." That we must ask what use, in the Game, Kim can make of a wisdom that defines the whole life of action as illusion is central to the tender irony that pervades the novel. But it is a challenge to the lama's Way, not a dismissal of it.

Teshoo Lama is a spiritual presence so compelling that it keeps the love and allegiance even of this savvy street kid turned sahib. On such dignity one does not play jokes. "He had dreamed dreams at school of returning to the lama as a Sahib—of chaffing the old man before he revealed himself—boy's dreams all." One of the more problematic affinities between Twain and Kipling was their love, in life and in fiction, of the practical joke. Even De Voto, espousing Twain's frontier

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

robustness against Brooks's Eastern genteelism, could not ignore the "inharmonious burlesque" that defaces the last chapters of his novel, and critics from Henry James to Edmund Wilson complained of *Stalky and Co.* But Kipling could control the tilt toward farce that Twain allowed to mar even his finest work. No contrast is more telling than his decision to make the maturing Kim consider, and reject, exactly the kind of prank most reminiscent of *Huckleberry Finn.*

Of all the reversible judgments, the least avoidable is the issue that has already insisted on making its way into this exposition, however I tried to hold it back. Of *Kim,* Said wrote that it is "a rich and absolutely fascinating but nevertheless profoundly embarrassing novel." *Huckleberry Finn,* too, continues to fascinate and embarrass, in unequal measure. E. L. Doctorow puts it categorically: "Something terrible happens—terrible for Huck, terrible for American literature," and Twain "blows his greatest work." Doctorow makes no excuses. "It is Huck Finn who struggles against the mores of his time to help the black man, Jim, escape from slavery, but it is Huck's progenitor" who brings back Tom, converts Jim's liberation into a protracted, cruel joke, and expects us to enjoy it. "Tom's book and Huck's book," writes Doctorow, "are conflicting visions of the same past, and at the end one vision prevails, and it is the wrong one." Huck and Tom. Sahib and Indian. Frederick Crews, writing of Twain, has spoken of "a conflicted authorial will." A critic such as D. L. Smith, brilliant, generous, and black, may try to save the appearances by reading Huck Finn as an allegory of Reconstruction. But the common reader must read with Hemingway and Doctorow a profoundly embarrassing novel, structurally fissured, ethically riven.

Today's common reader—or critic—is not, however, yesterday's. Time may, as Auden thought, forgive the trespasses of those who write well enough, but more than half a century went by before it was generally noticed that Twain had anything to be forgiven for. "What was principally wrong" with Tom's well-named "Evasion," thought De Voto, was that "Mark's innocent pleasure thrust it into a great novel." As late as 1948 Trilling could write of "this almost perfect work" that "only one mistake has ever been charged against it," and that mistake was an aesthetic, not an ethical lapse. The Evasion was "a falling off," "too long," "too elaborate," though, like Eliot, he defended its "formal aptness." Neither suggested that there were other grounds for criticism or for defense. It was not until 1953 that Leo Marx, in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, called attention to "the glaring lapse of moral imagination in *Huckleberry Finn*" and set the terms for the debate that still continues.

Against current apologetics we may usefully set the reading experi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ence of the Lampson Professor of English Literature at Yale. William Lyon Phelps, too, was defending Twain, whose genius he thought insufficiently recognized in accounts of American literature that gave him less space than Josh Billings and Artemus Ward. He knew Twain, and, closer to him in time and in assumptions about American society, he is arguably a more realistic reader of what is upon the page. Contrasting *Huck* with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Phelps praises Twain for "giv[ing] us both points of view," for including, along with "the horror," "the beautiful side of slavery," "its wonderfully beautiful, patriarchal side." As *Huck* rose to the status of cultural icon, the raft's brief idyll was remembered; the beautiful side of slavery, the side that is encoded in Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas and the good food they send the captive Jim, was ignored. Twain, after all, was anti-slavery; was not that enough? Jim was really free all along, and though the Evasion might be an artistic lapse, who would grudge Tom his little joke or Twain his innocent pleasure?

Kipling and his views have been less fortunate. A more conscious thinker than Twain, as well as a more conscious artist, he knew exactly where he stood and why. He could yearn for India, respect its religious thought, love in imagination its multivarious people as far as he knew them, think he knew them better than he did. He could not respect their ability to govern themselves. Today, perhaps, we may be ready to find it astonishing that for so long this has been harder to forgive than an appreciation of slavery's beautiful side.

Auden might pardon such views; Wilson could not. In mid-century, he knew "what the reader tends to expect": that "Kim will come eventually to realize that he is delivering into bondage to the British invaders those whom he has always considered his own people, and that a struggle between allegiances will result. . . . It never seems to occur to his creator that this constitutes a betrayal of the lama." A betrayal of the lama. A betrayal of Jim. "Kipling has committed one of the most serious sins . . . which are possible for an imaginative writer. He has resisted his own sense of life and discarded his own moral intelligence." Five years later Leo Marx would write of Twain's lapse of moral imagination. The need for pardon may be where the two books most profoundly connect.

Yet we may pardon differently, and for different things. *Kim* ends, tenderly and beautifully, with the lama; *Huck Finn* ends with Jim only in a way that, if we cannot forget it, we cannot endure. Kipling was able to imagine a plot to bring the sides of his head together, to resolve his conflicted authorial will into a dream of love so fully imagined it seems real—love subsisting not only for a few weeks in isolation, but in society and over time. It was, of course, impossible—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

perhaps the word is inconceivable—in the imperial India he had known to bring Indian and English adults together as equal friends, in actuality or in fiction. Twenty years later Forster would try it, only to conclude that it couldn't yet be done. It is hardly surprising that Mark Twain couldn't keep going a true black-white friendship in America in 1885.

But it is more than personal affection that provides Kipling's resolution, and this is where, as Said has argued, Wilson's anti-imperialism leads him to misjudge the artistic integrity of a novel that, embarrassing as it may be, we are, in Said's words, "entitled to read as belonging to the world's great literature." (Among Said's few revisions in incorporating the 1986 introduction to *Kim* into his 1993 *Culture and Imperialism* was to change "great" to "greatest.") However flawed the politics, the novel contains no such imaginative fissure as Twain's, since for Kipling it is exactly the British Empire, whose servant Kim has become, that guarantees the continuance of the multiple India he has loved, that protects and holds safe against change the paradise of his youth. In the sacramental moment when Kim lies down in the healing Indian dust—no English grass, "no new herbage that, living, is half-way to death already, but the hopeful dust that holds the seeds of all life"—Kipling has regained his Indian sunlight the only way he can regain it, in memory and art. It shines on British India in full ideality, maintained by the English hierarchy of class and race atop the Indian hierarchy of caste. Hierarchies will seem natural, even necessary, when you are born to them. Benign English power must tame and order that marvelous multiplicity (no immolated widows, no Hindu-Muslim bloodshed), and guarantee it against the aggressor from the North. "Oh, India, Oh, my country!" wrote Kipling when leaving it. Trilling called *Huckleberry Finn* "a hymn to an older America forever gone." For *Kim*, he would have had to change only one word.

After almost a century, we may need to remind ourselves of the power of that imperial ideal. It could, after all, make an imperialist even out of Mark Twain—whose anti-imperialism, based on his opposition to the U.S. annexation of the Philippines, has been greatly exaggerated. Inspired by Kipling to visit India, he returned to rehearse for eager Americans the most sensational British accounts of "the Satanic brotherhood of the thugs," along with horror stories of *suttee*, the Black Hole of Calcutta, and the "Great Mutiny." The Mutiny in *Kim* is accorded an understated page and a half, just enough to make the imperial point. In *Following the Equator*, Twain milks it for fourteen pages. It was not Twain but Kipling who wrote of Warren Hastings that "he saved to England the Indian Empire, and that was the best service that was ever done to the Indians themselves, those wretched heirs of a hundred centuries of pitiless oppression and abuse." It is in that con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

text that we may hear and pardon Kipling's hymn to the India he could neither transfix nor possess.

Such a hymn will raise, of course, the specter of "essentialism." There's not much to be done about that, in Twain, in Kipling, in a lot of other writers we are lucky to be able to read. Trilling's phrase, which deliberately echoes Twain's own words about *Tom Sawyer,* may remind us that hymning the past is something that artists do—sometimes, as Proust did, in its passingness, more often in what the passing, temporal consciousness strives to fix as a timeless essence. That is what an idyll *is.* Taken in that sense, it is not a minor form, but one of the continuing shapes art gives to our desire.

Nor need *Kim* and *Huckleberry Finn* seem as irrevocably past as all that. Huck has still enough to show us about race, and time has brought round even some of Kipling's views that seemed most obsolete. The imperial Russian outrages the lama's map of the moral universe in an act all too prophetic of what other lamas have suffered and are suffering at the hands of another empire, and today there is no Kim and no nation, imperial or otherwise, to come to their defense. And the Russian menace to India, mention of which seemed so retrograde in mid-century, takes on unexpected resonance when, recalling Afghanistan, we read the language of a Zhirinovsky who dreams of Russian soldiers who will "wash their boots in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean." Indeed the world changes. But some things do not change.

The past will always need our forgiveness, as will the passing present. If time indeed worships language, it is not for language alone, but because it preserves the past, in its blindness and its beauty, set down in what Grace Paley calls "the beautiful letters of the alphabet, invented by smart foreigners long ago to fool time and distance." *Huckleberry Finn* hymns a peculiarly American past, complete with the moral fissure that is integral to it. Kipling's multicultural idyll, begun in America, finished in England, suffused with India, though it too hymns a vanished past, reaches forward toward the future. Both novels hold up, however imperfectly, the possibility of an intercultural respect and admiration that society would not yet support, that neither Twain nor Kipling could in full consciousness espouse. Twain could take these emotions only so far. If Tom and Huck were the two sides of his head, they were both white. In Kipling's more complexly divided imagination, West and East met and mingled. He was the first to imagine what writers like Salman Rushdie and Homi Bhabha now call for and embody—"culture's hybridity," in Bhabha's words, the "Third Space" in which, as we explore it, we may "elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves," as we "transform our sense of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what it means to live, to be, in other times and places, both human and historical." That hybridity is irreversible, to the immense enrichment of our literature and our language. Twain, perhaps, had dimly seen his way toward it. Kipling took it further. Henry James, Kipling's admirer and antithesis (and witness at his wedding) in 1891 wrote of how he could convey "the sum of the feeling of life as reproduced by innumerable natures; natures that feel through all their differences, testify through their diversities."

Encouraged by this oddly prescient vocabulary of difference, we may play our own post-modern game as we imagine James singing with Bhabha in anachronistic harmony. If literature needs originary texts, or if we do, *Kim* may stand in full irony as the great originary post-colonial novel. With *Huckleberry Finn*, it can help persuade us to pardon the past its pastness, to recognize both what it could not see that is so clear to us and what is invisible to our own blinded eyes. The flaws and insights of our great books challenge us in many ways, not least, today, to free ourselves from the reductive expectation that what the mirror of art should reflect back to us is our own transient face.

Diana Trilling

1905–1996

Member, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR *Editorial Board*

1973–1978

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Haggin

WILLIAM YOUNGREN

I

I DON'T NOW REMEMBER how I first heard of B. H. Haggin's music criticism or when I started to read it, but it must have been about 1952, during my junior or senior year at college. I was majoring in English at Amherst, under teachers who were very much oriented towards close reading and what was then called the New Criticism. Since I had always had a strong interest in music, I began to cast about for critical writing on music that would be as illuminatingly analytical as their teaching and as the writing of Leavis, Empson, Richards, Kenneth Burke, and the other literary critics from whom I was learning so much.

One of my favorite teachers, Reuben Brower, had been a student of Leavis's at Cambridge in the early 1930s, just when Leavis was starting his magazine *Scrutiny*, and so it must have been from Brower that I first heard about *Scrutiny*. I searched through back issues for the sort of thing I was after, but I didn't find it in the writing of *Scrutiny*'s music critic, W. H. Mellers. I did, however, look up an article on Puccini by Mosco Carner, in an old *Music and Letters*, that Mellers had recommended as an example of musical close reading. All I remember from it is something about the "neurasthenic" effect of Puccini's constant falling melodic fifths. That seemed little better than Mellers.

Then I heard that in the early 1930s Kenneth Burke had written about music for the *Nation*. During the summer of 1952, between my junior and senior years, I was back home in Evanston for a while and did some reading in back issues of the *Nation* in Northwestern University's delightfully cool Deering Library. What I read of Burke's music criticism impressed me as the work of an immensely clever man who really didn't know much about music—all I remember now is something fancy about the outer ugliness and inner beauty of Schoenberg. This may well have been when I first encountered Haggin's writing, for he was a mainstay of the *Nation*'s back pages

✪ WILLIAM YOUNGREN is professor of English at Boston College.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

during the 1930s and 1940s. But if I did read him, I recall nothing of what I read.

I do recall having a conversation that involved Haggin during Christmas vacation the following winter. I had been having lunch downtown in Chicago with my old friend Frederick Schauwecker, at that time Jussi Bjoerling's accompanist, and Frederick had been regaling me with stories of the wonderful performances he had heard at the Staatsoper in Berlin in the late 1920s, during his student days. These performances were mainly of Wagner and Strauss, then two of my favorite composers, and had been conducted by Leo Blech, whose work I knew from recordings. This led to talk about the first complete recording of *Parsifal,* made during the 1951 Bayreuth Festival and conducted by Hans Knappertsbusch, which had recently been issued. I had been at that first postwar Bayreuth Festival, had found the *Parsifal* (and everything else) marvelous, and had just bought the recording. Somehow or other, I had heard that Haggin had written disapprovingly of it in the *Nation,* making it clear that he didn't have much use for *Parsifal* anyhow. I vividly recall standing on a street corner somewhere in the Loop, after our lunch, and telling Frederick, in what even then seemed to me an embarrassingly pompous and melodramatic manner, that no one who didn't have the sense to love *Parsifal* should even be allowed to review a recording of it.

So, however it happened, I had been touched by the air of intense controversy that had always surrounded Haggin and his work: I had got the idea that he was a critic to take seriously and to grapple with, to take sides for or against. When I arrived at Harvard, in the fall of 1953, to do graduate work in English, I noticed that my roommate Tom Edwards had Haggin's collection of *Nation* columns, *Music in the Nation,* which had been published in 1949. One day I was thumbing through it and taking note of all the praise of Toscanini. Now the first three classical recordings I had ever bought were Toscanini's 1939 *William Tell* Overture (because of "The Lone Ranger") and Beethoven's Fifth (because of "V for Victory") with the NBC Symphony, and his 1937 Beethoven "Pastorale" with the BBC Symphony. By 1953 I had loved all three recordings—which, incidentally, I still have—for about a decade. Yet I had learned that it was very "in" for intellectuals to debunk Toscanini in favor of such Germanic (and thus obviously more profound) conductors as Knappertsbusch, and so I made some flippant, dismissive remark. Tom mildly disagreed with whatever I had said and then added: "You know, we may get to meet Haggin soon—he often comes through Cambridge." At that I pricked up my ears.

Soon I had bought my own copy of *Music in the Nation*—they were being remaindered in Harvard Square—had read it from cover to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cover with great excitement, and had begun buying up copies to give as gifts to friends. Aside from the clarity and pungency of Haggin's writing, I was very much attracted by his strong intuitive sympathy with jazz. For at that time there was almost nothing good to read on jazz. Almost all of it was either owlishly pedantic or one-of-the-boys jocular. But Haggin was different. He really seemed to listen to Beiderbecke and Armstrong and Billie Holiday and Lester Young and Teddy Wilson with the same ears and mind, the same serious concentrated attention, that he applied to Toscanini and Schnabel and the Budapest Quartet.

The reason Haggin came often to Cambridge was that he had several good friends there, two of whom were friends of Tom's and were now becoming friends of mine as well. Bob Garis, who was teaching English at Wellesley and finishing his dissertation at Harvard, was at that time also writing for the *Nation*, supplementing Haggin's columns with brief record reviews. Paul Bertram, an English tutor at Leverett House who was also writing his dissertation, had first known Haggin in New York when he was an undergraduate at NYU. During that first year at Harvard, I spent many evenings drinking beer with them and with Tom at Cronin's and then, at closing time, often adjourning to Paul's rooms for more beer and some intensive listening and talk.

Until Harvard, the listening side of my musical education had mostly been conducted in private. I had listened mainly to Wagner and to such post-Wagnerian composers as Strauss and Mahler, and to jazz—early New Orleans and Chicago small-band jazz, and recent bop, with nothing in between. But now for the first time I began to canvass thoroughly the Viennese classics, mainly in recordings by the performers Haggin preferred: Toscanini, Schnabel, the Budapest Quartet.

In the spring of 1954 Haggin made his eagerly awaited appearance in Cambridge, and Paul gave a party. I recall standing for a long time with my back against a mantelpiece, watching more than participating and trying to drink enough to get up the nerve to say something to Haggin. At one point Ben Brower, who had also left Amherst for Harvard the preceding fall, came up to me, and as we were talking, Haggin joined us. They had evidently been introduced earlier in the evening but had not spoken at length. "You know," Ben said in his most languidly urbane Cambridge manner, "Helen and I really do think you're the *only* person who talks sense about music." "Well, thank you—thank you very much," replied Haggin, in his contrastingly clipped and precise New York accent, as he nodded and smiled in response.

Ben introduced us and then wandered off. My moment had come.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I had been especially impressed by what Haggin had written about Bix Beiderbecke—about "the contrast and delightful variety in pace, in direction, in accent; the unfailing continuity in this varied invention; the tensile strength of the continuous line of sound, and at the same time its delicacy and suppleness; the boldly soaring attack or rise to a high point, the sensitive fall away from this high point or at the end of the phrase." All these qualities, Haggin concluded, made Bix's playing "unique in style and more exciting and moving than that of any other jazz musician." So it occurred to me to begin with Bix. "You're the only classical music critic who writes about jazz with real understanding," I said (or words to that effect). "Exactly how high would you rate Bix Beiderbecke as a musical imagination?" Haggin was silent and looked intently at me for a moment. Then he said, with complete seriousness: "Certainly above Liszt, but not so high as Chopin."

This was what I was after! I had thought that what I wanted was a musical analogue to the closely analytical writing of the literary critics I admired. But that, after all, was not primarily what Haggin offered as a critic. Anyway, I would find that in Tovey and others soon enough. What I really wanted—I came only much later to realize—was a music critic who authoritatively and convincingly suggested criteria for the judgment of both works and performances. And, as my choice of a conversational opener with Haggin shows, I wanted that critic to view classical music and jazz with equal seriousness and equal love, as I did myself, and thus to give me a reasoned justification for having put together my musical world as I had rather haphazardly done.

For as I have said, as a listener I was largely an autodidact. Though I had studied and played several instruments in bands and orchestras, knew some theory, and had had a brief orchestral composition played one summer at Interlochen, I had had no guidance in taste. I had simply chosen whatever appealed to me from the things that had happened to come my way. My main allegiance, so far as classical music went, was to Wagner, Mahler, and Strauss, but I also loved Beethoven and Schubert. Yet they seemed less interesting because less profound, less overtly intellectual—they did not compose mythic tetralogies or base tone poems on books by Nietzsche. As for Haydn and Mozart, I always welcomed them but, like many older and wiser people at that time, I thought them merely light and gay, more entertainment than high art. Of Baroque music I knew only *Messiah,* a few Bach pieces, and perhaps Vivaldi's *Seasons*—these were, after all, the 1940s and early 1950s, when most pre-1750 music had to be sought out at such places as the Liberty Music Shop, on imported Anthologie Sonore disks. That was a bit rich for my blood.

My discovery of jazz had come about purely by chance. One of my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instruments was the tuba, and as a freshman in high school I was recruited by an older boy, a junior who was a real musical organizer, to play in a Spike Jones-type band that he arranged for and ran. Since most of the Spike Jones arrangements were merely a kind of coarsened Dixieland—indeed, some of Jones's players had been fairly well-known jazz players during the 1920s and 1930s—I began to listen to New Orleans and Dixieland jazz. I avidly read "purist" books, such as Rudi Blesh's *Shining Trumpets,* and learned that all 1930s big-band swing was "commercial" and therefore not to be taken seriously. But the great Charlie Parker small-band records on Dial and Savoy were just then coming out, and I found in them the same concerted excitement and purity of intention as in the Beiderbecke and Armstrong and Bessie Smith records of the 1920s.

So that was where I stood musically—and no one stood with me. My classical friends in high school and even in college either didn't like jazz or simply weren't interested in it, while my jazz friends thought that classical music, and especially the German late-Romantic sort that I loved best, was unbearably pretentious. In discovering Haggin and his Cambridge friends, I had finally found a set of highly articulate people who not only loved both jazz and classical music but who also knew a great deal more about the latter than I did. Thus I began learning my way around not only Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert but also Schumann, Chopin, and Berlioz, who were also favorites of Haggin's.

Soon after that party at Paul's I heard from someone, probably either Paul or Bob, that Haggin had enjoyed talking with me and would like to see more of me. Though this of course pleased me, it also astonished me. I was traveling in pretty fast company, and alongside my new Cambridge friends I felt painfully ignorant, slow, and dull—scarcely someone who would interest a personage such as Haggin. But the news emboldened me to find out his New York address and strike up a correspondence. Thereafter I would see him whenever he came to Cambridge, and soon I also began visiting him at his New York apartment whenever I went down for a weekend.

Then in the summer of (I believe) 1956 Bob Garis invited me to drive up with him to see Haggin at Camden, Maine, at that time his favorite summer retreat from the city's heat. I remember two things about that visit. First, that Haggin played us a recording of Elliott Carter's String Quartet No. 1 that he had just received for review. He could make nothing of it, he said—could we? Bob said he couldn't, and though I had a faint sense that there might indeed be something there for me, I didn't have the nerve to disagree and so went along. Second, some misguided public relations person had sent Haggin a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recording of a show at Harlem's famed Apollo Theater. He had, however, found himself interested in the routines of the black comedienne Moms Mabley. One thing puzzled him, though: why did she keep referring to people as "mothers"? This time, feeling ashamed of my earlier lack of honesty, I resolved to speak up. So I gathered my courage and told him what the word *mother* was shorthand for in Harlem. Instead of being primly disapproving, as I had feared, he looked very serious, nodded, and said, "Oh yes, very interesting."

I visited Haggin again in Camden during the summer of 1957, with the girl who would become my first wife the following year. We had gone camping in the Maine woods, and had very foolishly got ourselves lost for more than a day. Fortunately, we had a compass, and we knew that if we just kept heading west we would sooner or later hit Route 201, on which we could hitchhike south to Waterville, where we could catch the bus to Camden. I have always been a compulsive everyday shaver, but during our days in the woods I had, for the first and (so far) the last time in my life, sprouted the beginnings of a beard. Suddenly I felt strangely proud of it. But when we emerged from the bus at Camden, Haggin took one horrified look at me and quickly said: "Of course you'll want to shave before lunch." Of that visit I also remember his driving, which was terrifying and which I was never forced to experience again.

Of course I had heard a great deal about how difficult a man Haggin was—how one couldn't disagree with him, and so on. But I did not find this to be true. In fact, our correspondence began with a disagreement—about the respective merits of the old Gieseking recording of Mozart's K. 271 and the more recent Myra Hess recording with Casals. And through all the seventeen years of our close friendship, or at least until its very end, I found that Haggin welcomed disagreement so long as it was rational and was expressed clearly and unpretentiously. He hated any sort of putting on airs, and had an unerring nose for it. If he thought you were taking a particular position to create a certain effect, you were done for. But if it was clear that you honestly differed from him out of feeling and conviction, and if you could give him the reasons why you did so, then there was never any trouble.

I have recently learned, however, that Haggin really had been more difficult in the years before I got to know him. He was far edgier in company, and he got into frequent violent arguments that would leave his stomach tied into such painful knots that he would have to take to his bed for several days and take morphine for relief. But when powerful anti-depressant and anti-anxiety drugs such as Tofranil, Thorazine, and Stelazine began to appear, in the early 1950s, his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

psychiatrist prescribed them for him—which was evidently rather a bold move since they were then used almost exclusively in controlled hospital settings. So I got to know him at a good time.

I also got to know him at a musically interesting time. The first Glenn Gould recordings were just coming out—I especially recall the impression made on him, and on all of us, by the *Goldberg Variations*, the Beethoven First Concerto, and (a bit later) the Mozart K. 491. Berlioz's magnificent *Les nuits d'été*—which Haggin had never heard because (he claimed) it had never been performed in New York since he had begun going to concerts, in about 1910—was splendidly recorded by Eleanor Steber, and was helping to change the old image of Berlioz as merely a bombastic blowhard. And we were finally beginning to get some idea of the range and the shape of Haydn's career. The Schneider Quartet had made its still-unmatched recordings of many of the string quartets, the early and middle symphonies were being explored, and Sviatoslav Richter's extraordinary Moscow concert performance of the 1771 C-Minor Sonata had introduced us to a *Sturm und Drang* Haydn we had never known existed.

I recall with special clarity the entrance of Van Cliburn on the musical scene because it offered a first-rate example of what was so extraordinary about Haggin's abilities and his approach to his work. In 1958 Cliburn had won the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow—the first American ever to have done so, I believe—and had arrived home in triumph, to ticker-tape parades and all the rest. Not only was he American, he was also Texan: tall, gangly, unaffected, homespun (or so it seemed), just the sort to make great newspaper copy. And just the sort for academic intellectuals like me automatically to sneer at. Moreover, the first one heard of his playing was a performance of the Tchaikovsky B-flat-Minor Concerto, a work I had disliked since childhood. I heard the performance on the radio, and the next time I saw Haggin in New York I made a flippant comment about Cliburn not being much to write home about. Oh no, said Haggin, Cliburn was marvelous, a really important new pianist. I was astonished. My astonishment grew when Haggin put on the record that had revealed to him Cliburn's gifts as both a pianist and an interpreter, for it was a performance of the Rachmaninov Third Concerto, a work I should not have expected Haggin ever to be caught dead listening to. Still worse, it was Cliburn's playing of a cadenza—and Haggin usually skipped over cadenzas—that had attracted his attention. Yet when he played the record for me, I saw what he meant.

This incident is characteristic of Haggin's operation as a critic because it demonstrates one of his very best qualities: his disinterested openness to young performers. He was continually being outraged by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

newspaper reviewers who routinely pulled the "immaturity" gambit on young performers—by Irving Kolodin, for example, who loftily remarked of the great Guido Cantelli that the ability instinctively to choose the correct tempo for a piece was "not yet his." As with Cliburn, Haggin simply listened to young performers, and reported what his ears told him. No mere ideas about a performer's youth (or age, for that matter) were allowed to intrude between music and listener. This, I think, is as close as Haggin ever came to having a critical method.

The 1950s were also an especially creative period in Haggin's writing life. *The Listener's Musical Companion*, one of his best known and most reprinted books, came out in 1956—I recall that at that party of Paul Bertram's, Haggin and Bob Garis had disappeared for a time into another room to discuss the changes in the manuscript of the *Companion* that Bob had suggested. Soon after that, he was working on *Conversations With Toscanini*, which would appear in 1959. As he stitched together his old columns on Toscanini with his notes on their conversations, Haggin often told in company the anecdotes that would appear in the book—to get practice for writing them down, as it were. As anyone who has read the book knows, they are entertaining, revealing (about both Toscanini and Haggin), and often quite moving. Sometimes these anecdotes led him to tell other stories about Toscanini that could not appear in the book—for example, about his painful cruelty to his son Walter. One day Toscanini, Haggin, and Walter had been looking at old photographs of Toscanini, and Walter had attempted to enter the conversation by saying: "Oh Papa, you look so funny in that old suit!" Whereupon Toscanini, who was at all stages of his life an exceptionally handsome (and predictably vain) man, had turned on his less well-favored son: "Whatever I wear, I look better as you!—Whatever I wear!" And Toscanini had kept returning to the subject for the remainder of Haggin's visit.

In the summer of 1960 Haggin had a sort of breakdown. On his way up to Camden, he stopped in Cambridge to see Bob Garis. It was immediately clear that he was in terrible shape. He could hardly speak, or even look at Bob. So Bob convinced him to call his psychiatrist in New York at once, and to return that day by train. He renewed his prescription for anti-depressants, which he had apparently not been taking, and remained in New York for two weeks. He then returned to Cambridge by train, picked up his car, and drove to Camden.

But it was no good. He had no real friends in Camden, and (as Bob now suggests) he had no deadlines to meet. The Toscanini book was finished, and he had been dropped from the *Nation* three years ear-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lier. Though he was now writing for the *New Republic*, and had begun doing his quarterly "Music and Ballet Chronicle" for the *Hudson Review*, he did not have the weekly pressures that had, to a large extent, sustained him when he didn't have a book on the fire. At the time I had only a dim idea of what had happened, but I recall visiting someone else in Maine that summer and feeling a little guilty that I was not visiting Bernard.

After that he decided to spend his summers in Cambridge—much to the delight of all of us. In due course he appointed me to help him find a suitable apartment each spring. As one might imagine, he was most exacting in his requirements. But he provided me with a detailed list of them, and all went well. When concerned Cambridge matrons would ask whether he was careful and trustworthy, I had a stock reply that never failed to make its effect: "Is he careful? This man is still wearing shoes he had custom-made in London in 1937!"—which was, of course, absolutely true.

Those were great summers. I was teaching at MIT and my wife was teaching at Wellesley; we had a small but pleasant apartment in an old row house on the seedy side of Beacon Hill. Because our apartment was small, and because I like to be able to close the door firmly on my work at the end of each day, I had rented a room near Harvard Square to which I went whenever I had time to give to my own work. During the summers I was of course there every day, and a couple of days each week I would have lunch at Bernard's, usually followed by a walk around Cambridge. Then, as ever, I was making feeble attempts to lose weight, and just then they took the form of sternly restricting myself to cottage cheese and a tomato at lunch. But for dessert Bernard would always produce his (and, as he knew, my) favorite Linzertorte from The Window Shop on Brattle Street—and of course I never turned it down. His own lunch, as long as I knew him, was always a grilled cheese sandwich.

Of course I often saw him, at my place or someone else's, in the evening. He always claimed to hate parties. Once before I was married, when I was still living in the same Cambridge apartment I had shared with Tom Edwards, Bernard was in town and I had asked a number of people in. The afternoon preceding the event I had a phone call from him. "I just realized," he said in a strangled voice, "that what you had asked me to was a *party*." But once reassured that the people were presentable and congenial, he relaxed, came, and had a good time—as he always did, unless someone began buttonholing him and talking pretentiously or combatively. He was—at least when he was taking his medication—a much more social being than he knew.

He could be an immensely entertaining guest. His fund of anec-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dotes and observations—about music and musicians, the tangled left-wing politics of the 1930s, New York as he had known (and vividly remembered) it since early in the century, the smarmy ins and outs of the journalistic world—was inexhaustible. One of these has repeatedly come back to me in recent years. Sometime in the early 1960s, he remarked that the Metropolitan Opera audiences of the 1920s had no better musical taste than present-day ones—then too they thought Puccini or even Giordano was just as good as Mozart—but they were different in that they knew the difference between beautiful and ugly singing. Thus they would always cheer Caruso but boo Martinelli, who was a fine actor and skilled singer but whose voice, particularly in the upper register, had an unattractive metallic clang. What we wouldn't give today for such audiences!

Bernard also was a superb storyteller with a great gift for mimicry, able to tell Jewish jokes and stories in that curiously high-fidelity, three-dimensional accent that is, alas, only attainable by those who have grown up speaking Yiddish in the home. He had, for example, a marvelous imitation of Koussevitzky—whom someone said he made sound like a cross between Molly Goldberg and the Baron de Charlus. The first time he interviewed Koussevitzky in Boston, the conductor, with a glint in his eye, looked Bernard over and took his arm, saying, "I was expecting a much older man." Either then or at some later interview, Koussevitzky's secretary interrupted them to say that he had had a telegram from Carlos Chávez, inviting him to take part in some Mexican festival of modern music. Koussevitzky, with great aplomb, immediately gave instructions for his reply: "Wire him: 'I accept with pleasure, but don't count on me!'"

And there was the story about the man who ran the cleaning and pressing establishment that Bernard patronized, near his apartment in the northwest corner of Manhattan. There was another such place nearby, and one day Bernard and the man somehow fell into conversation about it. The man rather sanctimoniously informed Bernard that at the other shop, even though you took in some clothes to be cleaned and pressed, and others just to be pressed, the owner would stack them all in the same pile. Bernard, ever in pursuit of total clarity, inquired further: "You mean that he charges you for cleaning the things you brought in to be cleaned, but really only presses everything?" At which point the man, turning palms and eyes heavenward in an attitude of offended innocence, replied: "I run a luh-JIM-a-tul business; who am I that I should speak against my neighbor?"

Or there was the long story, most of which I have forgotten, about the old Jewish lady and her daughter—a friend of Bernard's—who were having a hard time during the Depression. Then the daughter

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suddenly got an excellent job with some New Deal administrative office. When told the good news, the mother only shook her head sadly: "But haven't I always told you: *fang shoyn nit on mitn government*—don't start up with the government?"

Best of all, there was the way Bernard could suddenly turn his sense of humor against himself. He had for many years gone to a doctor named Shapiro—oddly enough, "Scotty" Shapiro. One summer Sunday afternoon I had driven him back to Beacon Hill, and we had just parked in front of my apartment. He had been telling me about some ailment or other, for which he had of course gone to see Shapiro. For some reason I said, inanely, "That Shapiro must be a good doctor—you've been with him a long time." At this point Bernard stopped short in his narrative, gave the matter careful thought, and then burst into gales of semi-hysterical laughter. "No!" he managed to blurt out between spasms. "No! He's a lousy doctor! It's just my good luck that I've always been so damned healthy!" The two of us must have sat there for five minutes, reduced to utter helplessness.

Bernard loved those Boston-Cambridge summer evenings. Although he put away a good deal of bourbon, there was a strict limit beyond which he would never go. If he drank too much, he said, it instantly depressed him. Because he always observed the limit, he could use the bourbon to help him become as happily sociable a person as I have ever known. When it was time to go, he would invariably say, with an exaggerated mock-tragic air that (I always felt) was meant to cover his very real sadness at leaving, "Well, I have to tear myself away."

In the early 1960s, Bernard began assembling what he considered the best of his periodical writing into the collection that appeared in 1964 as *Music Observed.* I was very flattered when he asked me to help in making the selection. Being an extremely meticulous man, he had saved tear sheets of every piece he had ever published, and he dumped on me great heaps of yellowed clippings from the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, *Hound and Horn*, and even the *Brooklyn Eagle.* It was fascinating work, though immensely time-consuming. Especially if read through in strict sequence, his columns brought back the thirties and forties and fifties so vividly that my temptation was to mark virtually everything for inclusion. Often it took two or three run-throughs before I could bring myself to reject enough to come up with a sensible list of what to include.

The book was being published by Oxford University Press, and there were a number of hitches along the way. The one I remember best is the great index imbroglio. Unlike most authors, Bernard positively enjoyed making his own indexes because he saw them as offer-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing yet another opportunity to express his critical opinions. Thus there would not be a simple list of page numbers under a name such as Stokowski; there would be, rather, a series of specific entries: bad performances of, 231, 328; exhibitionistic tendencies of, 68, 114—and so on. While other, smaller publishing houses had indulged him in this pleasant fancy, Oxford was having none of it: they wanted a conventional index, which they saw as required by the standards of what they primly (and, in this case, unwisely) called "proper bookmaking." He had to give in, of course, but he retaliated by dishing out a good deal of unsolicited advice about the art of "proper bookmaking" along the way, whenever Oxford wanted to do something unorthodox with typography or footnote style.

Shortly after the book appeared, I was visiting Bernard at his New York apartment when he astonished me by asking if I would review *Music Observed* for *Partisan Review.* I looked steadfastly at my shoes and tentatively replied: "That would be hard." What I meant, of course, was that I felt too close to the book and to his criticism generally to do a disinterested job. I had, after all, had a hand in assembling *Music Observed,* and I thought it would be unethical for me also to review it. But he was hurt and angry at my seeming refusal. I talked it over with friends in Cambridge, and learned that Randall Jarrell, for whom I had the greatest respect, had been thanked for his help in *Music in the Nation* and yet had reviewed that book—and in the *Nation*! As I thought about it, I saw the review as an excellent opportunity to organize my thoughts about Bernard's criticism—to organize my thoughts as one can only do when one is forced to write something. Therefore, wisely or not (and I am still unsure), I agreed to do it.

II

As I prepared my review, I gradually came to see that all Haggin's criticism took as its point of departure the idea neatly encapsulated in the title of his 1944 book *Music for the Man Who Enjoys "Hamlet."* Because formal education and ordinary daily life better prepare us to deal with literature, and even with the visual arts, than with music, there is a large and sophisticated audience capable of enjoying *Hamlet* but not its musical analogues—Beethoven's late piano sonatas, say, or Schnabel's performances of them. This was the audience to which Haggin addressed himself, in that book and throughout his career, and he tried to show its members what they had to do in order to make great music, and great performances of music, as accessible (and enjoyable) to them as great literature or painting.

Of course almost everyone is initially more sensitive to language

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than to music, simply because language is our ordinary medium of communication. But inexperience was not the only obstacle, nor even indeed the main one, that Haggin saw as standing between his audience and musical sophistication. At least as great an obstacle was the intellectual sophistication they already possessed. For the more adept you are at handling ideas, the more liable you will be, when you approach music, to let ideas slip between you and the music, to substitute the historical schemes, the tendencies and trends, that are the stuff of "music appreciation" texts and concert program notes, or received ideas about what sort of performer should play what sort of music, for genuine, direct perceptions of what you actually hear. We can see this bad habit not only in the frequent pigeonholing of composers by period—is Beethoven "Classical" or "Romantic"?—but also in the nonsense about Toscanini's Beethoven and Wagner being somehow "Italianate," about the supposed existence of some hallowed Germanic tradition of conducting and instrumental performance, about the proprietary right of Polish pianists to Chopin and of French pianists to Debussy. Literary critics and critics of the visual arts are not nearly so liable to fall back on crude stereotypes of this sort as are music critics—and, therefore, those who turn to music critics for enlightenment.

A member of Haggin's chosen audience will also be likely, when he tackles music, to go for composers who have some reputation for high seriousness—especially of the German variety. Haggin was therefore often at pains to point out the considerable virtues of composers who lack such a reputation: Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Bellini, Donizetti, early and middle Verdi. And he wrote accurately and uncondescendingly about beautifully wrought performances of minor music—Toscanini's of Sousa marches, for example—as well as about the great Broadway show music of the twenties and thirties and (this is where I came in) about jazz. One way of summing up Haggin's message as a critic might be this: if you don't respond with spontaneous excitement and joy to the beautifully modeled melody of Verdi's "Tacea la notte placida," or to Toscanini's shaping of the countermelodies in "The Stars and Stripes Forever," or to Bix Beiderbecke's solo entrance on "I'm Coming Virginia," then you are probably missing something important in your listening to Toscanini's *Eroica* or Schnabel's Op. 111.

What Haggin tried to do was thus what any good critic tries to do: to put his readers in direct contact with the medium of expression with which he is concerned. This is, again, far easier for literary critics, who communicate in the same medium they are concerned with, and even for critics of the visual arts. A poem or a section of a novel can be cited directly on the critic's page, and though even a fine color repro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

duction is no substitute for a painting, it is a more accessible (and hence more effective) illustration of a critic's remarks than a quotation printed out in music type. So how is one to talk about music? What language is one to use?

Haggin's answer to this question—over which so much ink has been spilt and so many big thinkers have made such heavy weather—was a simple commonsense one. Music is a medium of communication, and individual musical works formally embody and convey insights that, like those of a poem or novel, can only be roughly paraphrased in the ordinary descriptive language we use to convey to others our thoughts and feelings. Yet this sort of language is the principal sort that the critic must use in describing and evaluating what he hears and in getting his reader to hear it too. Thus, as Haggin once put it, there is nothing wrong with saying that what the second movement of Beethoven's Op. 111 communicates is "the sense of experience mastered, of profound lessons learned, of resignation, inner illumination achieved"—providing we realize clearly that no such rough summary statement can ever make the sonata itself superfluous, and that the limitations of verbal language in this area would perhaps force us to use the same words in paraphrasing the content of other music, for example the opening of Schubert's posthumous B-flat Sonata.

Of course the technical language of musical analysis can help us to illustrate, and to pin down more firmly, what we say about a piece of music. But it must be subordinated to the critic's central concern with description and evaluation. The musical analyst is constantly tempted to slip into discovering, and making much of, designs and patterns that exist only on the pages of the score, and that may count for little or nothing in the actual temporal experience of hearing the work—what the Germans call *Augenmusik*: music only for the eye, not for the ear.

The clippings that Haggin gave me when he asked me to help him with *Music Observed* did not include any of his very earliest work, which I gathered he had for some reason disowned. So out of curiosity I looked up and xeroxed as many of his early pieces as I could find. They made fascinating reading because they revealed that in the 1920s he had been deeply interested in just the sort of theoretical issues that since then had come to seem to him mere pretentious nonsense.

In those days Muck and Mengelberg were the conductors who mattered, and Toscanini—along with Stokowski!—was symptomatic of a new and regrettable "emotional trend in performance": "Formerly changes in tempo and color revealed pattern and structure, now they convey emotions; and as against Mr. Mengelberg's architectonics of form we now have Mr. Toscanini's architectonics of emotions." In

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contrast to his later, commonsense view of music as a medium for the communication of insights that can be at least approximately described in ordinary language, Haggin believed then that music uses sounds "not to convey intellectual meanings, or emotional meanings, but to convey what must be called a purely musical significance, a significance *sui generis* . . . primarily music expresses only itself."

Now this sort of formalist musical aesthetics has a respectable history, being perhaps most closely connected with the names of Hanslick and Stravinsky. But it raises insuperable problems for the practicing critic. For how, exactly, are those *sui generis*, purely musical significances to be indicated or described? That qualifying "primarily" in the last phrase just quoted from Haggin perhaps betrays some sense of the obstacles that this view of music places in the critic's path. In others of his early columns, the extremely austere (and perhaps senseless) notion that music expresses only itself is pared down to mean only that in order to become fully intelligible, any "mere verbal description" of music must be supplemented by "direct, comprehending—which means educated—experience" of the music itself—an idea I think no one would quarrel with.

In the introduction to *Music Observed*, Haggin gave a brief account of his development as a critic, in the course of which he referred to "the clarifying articulation" that enabled a Toscanini performance to seem "literally to reveal the structure and expressive significance of the work for the first time." Although he does not say so there, or anywhere else that I know of, I would guess that it was Toscanini's performances during his New York Philharmonic years (1926–1936) that led Haggin to the realization that "pattern and structure" in music are not to be set over against "emotions," and that made it seem natural to link "structure and expressive significance." For the "structure" of a piece of music is not a static "pattern," capable of being experienced all at once, but reveals itself to the listener only gradually, as it is articulated in a performance that moves through time. And the way a performer articulates it is precisely by giving each section of the piece its appropriate expressive—that is, emotional—weight and coloring, both in itself and in relation to other sections and to the whole.

In any case, this realization, however it was achieved, led to a shift in Haggin's critical terminology. At some point in the early 1930s, he stopped equating "structure" in music with "pattern," a word more appropriate to the visual arts, and began, especially in his writing about Toscanini, to talk about the "plastic continuity" of a performance that moved, satisfyingly and illuminatingly, through "the sound-time continuum." These two rather jargony phrases, which irritated a number of his readers (including me), enabled Haggin to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conceive of and to discuss musical structure dynamically rather than statically. Interestingly enough, he borrowed "plastic continuity" from a critic of the visual arts, as I guessed (and he verified) when I first read Roger Fry's 1927 book on Cézanne, one of Haggin's favorite painters. But Fry often spoke of paintings in terms of rhythm and movement, almost as though they were musical works—he writes, for example, that Cézanne never "put down a touch, not only that was inharmonious, but that did not increase the richness of an original chromatic chord." As for "sound-time continuum," I have always assumed that was Haggin's adaptation of "space-time continuum," a phrase that began to appear in the 1920s in popular books about the new physics.

I felt very strongly that Haggin's development as a critic would emerge far more clearly in *Music Observed* if he reprinted some of his early, theoretical pieces. And I argued vigorously that he do so. But he would have none of it. He regarded his own early position with the utmost distaste, as something not merely to be rejected intellectually but to be almost shamefully suppressed as well.

Another interesting thing about these early pieces was the interest they revealed in what was then thought of as jazz. His assumption of the formalist position in musical aesthetics would lead one to expect Haggin's taste to have been narrowly intellectualist. But just as he was not that sort of critic later on—witness his love for Tchaikovsky and Verdi, Bix Beiderbecke and Louis Armstrong—so he was not in the 1920s.

It was for me a great surprise to find Haggin seriously reviewing such books as Paul Whiteman's *Jazz*, Henry O. Osgood's *So This Is Jazz!*, and R. W. S. Mendl's *The Appeal of Jazz*, as well as taking issue with such supporters of what then passed for jazz as Gilbert Seldes and such hostile critics as Daniel Gregory Mason. Plainly, the part that American popular music was playing, and might in future play, on the American musical scene was of great interest to him. As he explained in a 1944 *Nation* column, it was Seldes's article "Toujours Jazz," which appeared in the *Dial* in 1923 and later became part of his book *The Seven Lively Arts*, that first interested Haggin in jazz. But to Haggin as to Seldes and most other writers, jazz then meant the music written by white composers such as Gershwin and played by white bands such as Whiteman's. "All through the twenties," Haggin later wrote, "the talk I heard continued to be about Gershwin's songs and Whiteman's performances; and I didn't hear as much as the names of Fletcher Henderson, Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines, and others until the early thirties."

That was when Haggin met John Hammond, the talent scout and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

record producer who discovered and promoted Billie Holiday, Count Basie, and many other important musicians—right down to Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen. Hammond sometimes took Haggin to recording sessions that turned out to be of historic importance—for example, the 1935 sessions at which Red Norvo recorded "Blues in E Flat" and Billie Holiday recorded "Miss Brown to You" and "What a Little Moonlight Can Do." The great pianist Teddy Wilson was a prominent figure in both these sessions, and Haggin recalled hearing Wilson at about this time, or perhaps a little earlier, on 52nd Street. I remember being astonished when he told me, with the utmost seriousness, that Wilson's half-hour solo improvisations on popular songs had been so spectacularly inventive and coherent that they reminded him of Beethoven's late quartets.

Haggin had been impelled to his austere commitment to *sui generis* musical meanings by his fear that attributing intellectual or emotional content to a musical work might suggest that the work itself was (or could be rendered) superfluous, that "mere verbal description" might take the place of "direct, comprehending . . . experience" of the music. The slightly later literary counterpart to this fear was neatly embodied in Cleanth Brooks's phrase "the heresy of paraphrase": merely to paraphrase a poem is to suggest that the poem itself is reducible to its paraphrase and is therefore unnecessary. Though Haggin early abandoned *sui generis* musical meanings, the fear that had led him to them stayed with him, and produced his lofty, lasting contempt for musicologists, both historians and analysts.

For Haggin was a true aesthete. The musical work, in its uniqueness and autonomy, was what counted for him. Fair enough. But he felt that this uniqueness and autonomy were necessarily endangered (or at least compromised) whenever the work was used to support a generalization about a period or style or technique of composition, or about its composer's culture or psychology. In a 1939 *Nation* column he wrote:

> History is a legitimate study, but Mozart did not write his G minor Symphony to provide a lesson in history. He intended it as a work of art to be experienced; and its value is not in what it can teach—not in any facts about it, about its composer, about his period—but in the experience which it affords as a work of art.

To which one might reply that the Greeks did not fight the Peloponnesian War to provide a lesson in history, and that Thucydides, who served as a general in that war, knew this quite well. Yet Thucydides was nonetheless justified in writing his great history of the war. No matter what Mozart may or may not have intended, his G-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Minor Symphony is a fact of history, just as surely as is the Peloponnesian War. Of course it is also, unlike the Peloponnesian War, a work of art. But why should there be any necessary contradiction between experiencing it as a work of art and discussing it as a fact of history? They are simply two different (though related) activities.

Haggin continued: "to know the relation of Mozart's style to the style of an eighteenth-century rococo interior is to know only what Mozart had in common with a hundred mediocre contemporaries, not what was uniquely his." To which one might reply that not only is there no necessary harm in learning what a great artist had in common with his mediocre contemporaries, but also that such knowledge can usually help us to set him off from them, to point up more sharply what made him great and left them mediocre. This is why jewelers display diamonds on backgrounds of black velvet. Anyway, it is impossible to talk very long (and to continue to talk interestingly) about a work of art without being led, quite naturally, to place it in relation to its period, its style, facts about its creator's life, and other works of art.

Haggin was just as tough on the analysts as he was on the historians. Reviewing Charles Rosen's fine book *The Classical Style*, he objected strenuously to a number of Rosen's reductive analyses, each of which revealed a sort of basic shape or "skeleton" (as Rosen rather infelicitously called it) behind the elaborated detail of a particular passage.

Rosen had claimed, for example, that the first-movement development section of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata "uses sequences of descending thirds as almost its only method of construction, and concentrates on them with a determination and a fury previously unheard in music." To back up this claim, Rosen had printed out almost sixty bars of the work, adding above the two piano staves another stave on which he had sketched, mainly in whole notes, the recurring descending thirds as they appeared in the music. Writing of this analysis, Haggin referred to Rosen's "skeleton of [the music], in the uppermost stave, as a sequence of slowly descending thirds, which I—and I am sure most listeners—cannot hear in place of, or at the same time as, the rapidly and differently moving theme Beethoven actually wrote." Of a slightly later passage in the development, Haggin wrote: "I am sure it is the textural intensification of the thematic activity of both hands that holds most listeners' attention, as it does mine, not the skeletonized slowly descending thirds . . . that Rosen hears."

But Rosen also talked about the "energy" of the passage, and called attention to such other surface characteristics of the music as its harmonic and melodic rhythm, making it clear that he was not hearing (or implying that we should hear) the descending thirds sketched in his upper stave "in place of, or at the same time as, the rapidly and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

differently moving theme Beethoven actually wrote." Musical analysis, like other sorts of analysis, abstracts in order to illuminate. What Rosen was actually doing was not unlike what a Shakespeare critic does when he calls our attention to a recurring pattern of imagery in one of the plays. Such a critic is not exhorting us to forget all that old nonsense about plot and character, and to redirect our attention solely or even primarily to the imagery. We are not, that is, being asked to extract the trains of images from their context and substitute them for the play Shakespeare "actually wrote." Once we have noticed how frequent and important animal imagery is in *King Lear* or cooking imagery is in *Troilus and Cressida,* we are intended merely to fit this new knowledge back into our total response to the play with enriching effect. This is precisely the sort of enrichment Rosen was aiming at.

These two theoretical errors are, as we shall see, interesting for what they tell us about the way Haggin's mind worked, especially as he got older. But they were not what provoked his readers to write him angry letters. They usually wrote to object to his particular judgments or to the general character of his musical taste: he didn't like Bach or Brahms or Puccini enough; he didn't know enough about Renaissance music; he was too hard on the avant-garde music of our own century. In regard to such complaints, all that need be said here in his defense he himself said many times: a critic must listen with his own ears, report accurately what he hears, and give his reasons for judging this or that composer or performer as he does. This is all a reader can legitimately ask, and Haggin did it superbly throughout his more than sixty years as a practicing critic. His theoretical errors got in his way only when, for some reason or other, he tried to talk theoretically, which his early experience with *sui generis* musical meanings had made him very reluctant to do.

III

So much for the way I came to view the nature of Haggin's criticism and his development as a critic, as a result of writing my review of *Music Observed* for *Partisan Review.* That review, which appeared in the magazine's summer 1965 issue, was the third piece I had written for *Partisan* and the second one I had ever written on music. (The other, which also appeared in *Partisan,* was a review of two collections of Whitney Balliett's jazz criticism.) I had originally been invited to write for *Partisan* by Richard Poirier, a graduate-school friend who had become one of the magazine's editors. Soon after my review of *Music Observed* appeared, Haggin, who by then had been writing his quarterly *Hudson Review* "Music and Ballet Chronicle" for several years, very

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kindly asked Frederick Morgan, *Hudson*'s editor, if I might occasionally review books on music for him. The first one, which arrived early that fall, was a pretentious, overblown history of American music called *Music in a New Found Land,* by W. H. Mellers, whom I had briefly encountered a dozen years earlier in the pages of *Scrutiny.* At this point, in order to continue the story of my friendship with Bernard Haggin, I must talk about other areas of my personal life that may at first seem irrelevant and even intrusive.

It was just as I was writing my Mellers review that my wife had the first of a series of increasingly violent and destructive breakdowns that were to lead, four years later, to the sad end of what had otherwise been a happy and congenial marriage. A similar breakdown had forced her to drop out of college for a year, but that had been more than ten years earlier and there had been no recurrences. The trouble now seemed to center on her doctoral dissertation, which she was having great trouble starting. She too had been a graduate student in English at Harvard, and, like me, had passed her comprehensives early in 1958, the year we were married. But while I had completed my dissertation in 1961, she had been stalled for seven years.

A year later, in 1966, our life became still more complicated when I was offered a job, with promotion, teaching at Smith. Since the Smith teaching schedule was on three consecutive days, I could continue to live in Boston, commuting to a college apartment in Northampton early each Monday morning and returning each Thursday morning.

At some point during the 1966-1967 academic year, the year before I was to take up my appointment at Smith, I began, at my wife's urging, to help her with her dissertation. The ideas were all hers, but they were embodied in extraordinarily rough and muddled drafts. The subject was one I knew well, however, and by that time I was an experienced enough writer to be able to turn her drafts into clear, consecutive prose.

Despite my natural desire to help her, I undertook the job reluctantly. Though I would be doing no more than editors are sometimes forced to do, the whole thing seemed unethical—and her adviser was my old friend and mentor, Ben Brower, the last person in the world I wanted to deal with unethically. Moreover, it would take a lot of work, and I had plenty of work of my own I was itching to get at. Finally, I didn't see how such an arrangement could possibly be good for her in the long run. Yet her psychiatrist, a highly respected Boston practitioner, assured me that it would help and that it was the right thing to do under the circumstances. So we set to work.

But in the spring of 1967 she had another breakdown, this time involving a very scary (and quite serious) suicide attempt. So that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

summer we made one last stab at getting her dissertation done without involving me. A young friend of Haggin's, who had worked as an editor at Yale University Press, seemed willing to take it on. But when he studied her drafts, he was reduced to something approaching panic—and so there was no way out. She and I worked steadily all summer and made good progress. But it was with some trepidation that I undertook my new job that fall.

We finished our work that winter, and she was duly awarded her Ph.D. at the June 1968 Harvard commencement. But she had a small breakdown in April, just after submitting the dissertation. For of course she knew that the work was not wholly hers, and this understandably preyed on her mind. That summer was very difficult, and things got still worse when I returned to Smith in the fall. She had another minor breakdown in late January 1969, and then in May, just as classes were ending, a very terrible one in which she tried to kill us both.

I had had enough. I decided that I had done everything I could, that I was not going to spend the rest of my life as a psychiatric nurse, and that anyway she was simply not up to the ordinary strains, the daily ups and downs, of marriage: a single life, even with its inevitable loneliness, would be easier for her to handle and would give her a better chance of surviving intact. It was a miserable, wracking time and a difficult decision. But her parents, to whom I had grown very close, agreed with me and wished me well. The remainder of her life, until she died of cancer in 1980, was productive and relatively stable.

That spring I and one of my Smith students, a senior who was unhappily married and had a two-year-old son, had fallen in love. This, naturally, had thrown me into a quandary. But now, suddenly, it seemed that I had a chance at a better life. In October 1970, we were married at Nantucket; the past quarter-century has seen the hopes I had then more fully realized than I could possibly have imagined.

IV

During my marital difficulties, our ultimate separation, and my decision to remarry, Bernard was in all ways a steadfast friend. He continued to see a great deal of my former wife, who had returned to New York, which had been her home, yet he and I remained very close. That began to change the very weekend that I got my divorce, yet the change was in no way caused by the divorce.

I had flown to Mexico on a fall weekend in 1970 that happened to be the only one when Bernard could visit Northampton. His schedule could not be changed, nor could mine, since the cheap and easy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mexican divorces were just then being phased out. So the Saturday night of that weekend, Virginia, my bride-to-be, invited him to dinner, along with my old college and graduate school friend Bill Pritchard, then as now teaching at Amherst, and his wife Marietta. I returned to New York on Saturday and drove up to Northampton, arriving late that night.

Virginia liked Bernard, but she understandably found him (and the whole weekend) a little trying, and so on Sunday afternoon, to get some relief, she went out for a long walk, leaving the two of us alone to talk. He seemed very affable, glad that my long ordeal was over and that we were now free to marry. But as soon as Virginia was out of the house, he suddenly turned serious. "Bill," he said, "I like Virginia very much, but there's something I must tell you about her." "Oh?" I asked, not having the faintest idea what to expect. "She doesn't seem fully in touch with reality." I was flabbergasted. There was nothing he could possibly have said that would have been less appropriate to the person he was saying it about. "How do you mean?" I managed to ask. "Well, last night when the Pritchards were here, I was telling how badly Poirier had behaved in connection with that *Partisan* piece of mine, and Virginia asked 'Why would he have wanted to do that?'"

Some years earlier, Haggin and Poirier had indeed had some sort of trouble about a piece Haggin had written for *Partisan Review.* The ins and outs, as so often with Haggin, were extremely complicated, and I had forgotten the whole business by 1970—let alone being able to reconstruct it now. But whatever Poirier had done, it had forever branded him as a scoundrel so far as Haggin was concerned. Virginia, on the other hand, who was working on a doctorate in English at Rutgers, where Poirier was chairman of the English Department, knew him only as a brilliant teacher and helpful adviser. Yet Haggin, who knew this, expected her immediately to agree, completely and unquestioningly, with his judgment not only of Poirier's conduct in this particular affair but also of Poirier as a person. Not to do so—not, in effect, to be completely inside Haggin's mind at the moment, perfectly sharing his knowledge and judgments—was to be as out of touch with reality as Rosen had been with the music Beethoven "actually wrote."

I didn't, at the time, fully grasp the implications of what Bernard had said, though I had the good sense to drop the subject immediately. But he then astonished me again by asking me to read both sides of his recent correspondence with Bob Garis, with whom he was about to break off his friendship. Shocked, I of course refused. He accepted my refusal graciously, but he seemed puzzled by it.

From there, things between Bernard and me went steadily downhill. I had recently come to know Pierre Boulez's superb recording,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the Cleveland Orchestra, of Debussy's *Images.* Comparing Boulez's performance of *Ibéria* with my tape of Toscanini's 1941 performance with the Philadelphia Orchestra, which at that time still remained unissued, I had come to feel that Toscanini's reading of the languorous middle movement was too straightforwardly linear, and to prefer Boulez. Going back over some of Haggin's old *Nation* columns in the Smith library, I had noticed that in his December 20, 1941, review of a concert at which Toscanini performed *Ibéria* with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Haggin had said he "did not find" the performance "a satisfactory embodiment of [the work's] content"—a statement he had omitted when he reprinted the review in *Music in the Nation.* In a letter I wrote him in February 1971, I asked if what had dissatisfied him might possibly have been what I now took to be Toscanini's overly linear performance of the middle movement.

In his reply Bernard explained that it had been something else about the performance that had displeased him, and he also explained why he had omitted that sentence from his book. Then, for no reason I could discern, he launched into a tirade about a conversation I had all but forgotten, that we had had in September 1959, at a restaurant in Harvard Square, about his *Conversations With Toscanini,* which had just been published. I had mildly objected to certain passages early in the book where I thought he had pushed some of his pet technical terms—including "plastic continuity" and "sound-time continuum"—on the reader too soon and without adequate preparation, making the writing sound jargony. Nothing much had come of the conversation at the time, except that he disagreed with me—which I fully expected. Now, however, he had apparently taken my question about the *Ibéria* remark, and its omission from *Music in the Nation,* as some sort of criticism, and that had brought painfully back to his mind my very mild criticisms of *Conversations With Toscanini,* a book I did and do admire very much, criticisms to which he now ascribed a weight and seriousness I had never intended them to have.

The letter quickly became accusatory and defensive. Quoting, apparently at random, from other columns from 1941 and 1942, he asked after each quoted passage whether I would have had any difficulty understanding the passage and whether I thought his other readers would have understood it. He then angrily concluded: "Perhaps you *would* have had difficulty; and perhaps some of my readers did. But that doesn't mean I was wrong in writing what I wrote." This led to downright offensiveness: "I couldn't budge you from this remote-from-reality *idée fixe* of yours in 1959; and I have no illusion that I have budged you from it now." So now I too, it seemed, was out of touch with reality.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In a firm but conciliatory letter, I tried, yet again, to clarify what I had meant back in 1959, but this only brought more accusations about my "quirky *idées fixes*." I then wrote him that I didn't like being spoken to in that way and didn't think I deserved it. But he replied that he, not I, was the one who now had a right to feel hurt and insulted.

The reason, however, had nothing to do with our argument about *Conversations With Toscanini*, but rather with my refusal to agree with his allegations that Bob Garis had behaved badly to him on a number of occasions when I too had been present. Bob, it seemed, had "brainwashed" me (and various other friends we had in common) into taking his view of these occasions. I was learning that whenever Bernard broke off one of his friendships, he tried to enlist support for and approval of his action from other people who knew both him and the friend who was about to be cut adrift—circling the wagons around the campfire, as it were. But in addition to having refused to read his correspondence with Bob, I had also refused, in conversation, to agree with his versions of these various occasions. So I promised to sit down at some point during the summer and write him a letter that gave him a full account of my considered responses. He was most grateful for this, and hoped that my letter would "at last provide satisfying statements on the matters that have troubled me in recent years."

That April, six months to the day after our wedding, my college and graduate school friend Charley Blyth, who was also a close friend of Bernard's, got married. Virginia and I drove down from Northampton for the reception, stopping first to pick up Bernard. He seemed very edgy with me. At his apartment we listened to a little of Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*—probably Boulez's performance with the Cleveland Orchestra, which had recently been broadcast and which Bernard and I had both taped off the air. As we came to the section depicting Juliet's funeral procession, I pointed out a few bars of string writing that I have always found flaccid and plodding in comparison with the wonderful music surrounding them. Much to my surprise, Bernard responded with fury. I was so taken aback that I don't recall much of what he said, but I do recall that at the high point of his tirade, face scarlet with rage, he was screaming at me that I ought to have "a sense of proportion"—and that he then suddenly stopped in mid-sentence, apparently aware of the blatant absurdity of responding to a mild and inoffensive remark by screaming about the other person's lack of proportion.

The reception was at the house of a cousin of Charley's, in a very posh part of Long Island where there are almost no street signs, and so we had a hard time finding it. Bernard was very tense, and so when

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we finally pulled up I attempted to smooth things over by saying, "Well, here we are at last" (or something equally fatuous). "No thanks to you!" he burst out angrily. Once we entered the house, I left him to his own devices and had a very good time.

Virginia drove on the way back, and we got lost in deepest Bronx—I recall getting out several times to ask directions. By the time we got to Bernard's neighborhood, he had eased up somewhat, and we got some sandwiches at a deli and took them up to his apartment. To my surprise and relief, he seemed very relaxed and friendly. That was the last time I ever saw him.

Even at the time I promised Bernard the letter about Bob Garis, I was pretty sure that there was no realistic possibility of its affording him the satisfaction he sought. That would have required me to be in as perfect agreement with him—as completely inside his head, as it were—as he had expected Virginia to be in the matter of Poirier and *Partisan Review*. Anything less, it seemed clear, was bound to get me accused of being out of touch with reality, the victim of still more quirky *idées fixes*. I could sense the end of our friendship approaching with an ominous inevitability that was, however, wholly of his making. But even though I was sure the whole business would end in disaster, and even though I refused to bend what I took to be the truth in order to placate him, I still felt that I owed him as full and honest an account as I could give. That letter took me almost a week to write.

He was in Europe that summer, traveling with two friends of his and mine from New York, Richard and Connie Harrier. His reply to my letter, fifteen handwritten pages mailed from Italy and dated July-August 1971, was a masterpiece, straight out of a late Henry James novel. He began by announcing that the "clarifying thinking" he had done since asking me for a letter had rendered the letter unnecessary. "But I let you go ahead with it, out of interest in whether *you* had achieved any new insight." Then, after thirteen pages of intricately reasoned condescension—I had not, it turned out, "achieved any new insight"—he waxed elegiac, even lyrical. The lowering of intellectual standards that had permitted me to write as I did, he wrote, "has been painful not only to observe in the person I respect, admire and cherish most in the world, but to experience, to be in the midst of; and it has been painful to speak of it to him." The concluding paragraph was a beautifully cadenced evocation of the landscape in the Tyrol in which he then found himself, finished off with wistful reminiscences of his last visit to that region, in the summer of 1912.

I was deeply touched and saddened, reading all this, but also faintly disgusted. I don't mean to suggest that I thought for a moment there was anything cynical or consciously contrived about it: Bernard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Haggin, whatever his other failings, didn't have a cynical bone in his body. But the high-toned theatricality, the oh-so-sensitive regret, above all the sense of sadly (yet nobly) bowing to the dictates of fate in telling me, more in sorrow than in anger, what a dumb shmuck I was—all this left a distinctly bad taste.

That summer, though, I had more important and interesting things than the mental health of Bernard Haggin to occupy me: Virginia and I were expecting our first child, I had accepted a tenure position at Boston College, and we had bought a house in Wellesley Hills. After two years in the boondocks I was eager to get back to Boston, and also eager to have a crack at teaching graduate students in Boston College's newly instituted doctoral program in English.

Bernard's trip to Europe had been a disaster. By the time they returned to New York, he and the Harriers were barely speaking to one another. I was pretty sure our friendship was over, but I called him as soon as I knew he was home, and said something hopeful about getting together soon. He didn't know about that, he replied; he had been "brooding" a good deal about the events of the recent past.

That fall he began writing warmly affectionate letters to Virginia, into which, once again circling the wagons around the campfire, he always managed to slip some remark that justified his continuing disapproval of what he called my "intellectual operation" in relation to Garis, *Conversations With Toscanini*, and the rest. Quite a new note of jocular arrogance regarding me began to creep into these letters: "After 12 years Bill was able to see that his single criticism of *Conversations With Toscanini* in 1959 had had no validity"—which, incidentally, was not true at all—"who can say another twelve years won't bring other such changes?"

Meanwhile, Bernard's letters to me steadily became more obsessively demanding—that I explain and re-explain, that I go over all the evidence yet again, in effect that I adopt wholesale his way of seeing everything under discussion. I was immensely irritated by them, but I was of course also concerned about the state of mind that produced them, and I mentioned this to Bob Garis, who in turn mentioned it to Bernard's old friend Alice Morris, fiction editor of *Harper's Bazaar*. Bernard got wind of it, and began demanding to know exactly what it was I had said to Bob that he had then said to Alice.

Once again I had had enough. On December 30, 1971, two weeks before the birth of our older daughter, I wrote him a stiff letter in Hagginese, apparently the only language he was now capable of understanding. My closing words explained what I had said to Bob and why I had not written to him, Bernard, earlier:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I said that the emotional excesses, confusions of argument, and distortions of fact that made it pointless to attempt a reply also made it appear that your need to "brood"—your word for it—until you discovered (or manufactured) betrayals by old friends had now hardened into a compulsion that operated with no regard for the realities of the situation. And I said that this seemed terribly sad because it was all really so needless.

In reply he sent me the only letter he could send, breaking off our friendship. But the anguished response he was accustomed to receive on such occasions never arrived, for I never again communicated with him. From time to time, for several years thereafter, I would receive a furious postal card, without salutation and signed only "B.H.," telling me just one more time how wrong I had been about this or that. But I remained silent as the tomb.

I had seen too many of Bernard's friends suffer at the breakup of their friendships with him because they allowed him to occupy the position of strength. I was determined not to do that. I resolved that once I was convinced it was hopeless, I would force him to break it off—and then leave him alone with his thoughts. My experience of my first wife's madness had taught me that you cannot continue to have a relation with someone who has drifted beyond the bounds of rationality. The somewhat over-psychologized Cambridge world in which I had spent the preceding eighteen years tended, I had come to feel, to blur the distinction between ordinary neurosis, which can be negotiated with and hence lived with, and real madness, which cannot. Anything and everything (so the gospel ran) can be cured by talking it out, by "understanding." At first seduced by this seemingly humane and enlightened view, I had learned that it was false, and I would never be caught out again.

But Bernard's madness—for I cannot honestly call it anything else without indulging in genteel (and pointless) euphemism—was different from that of my first wife. When the fit was on her, she behaved alike to everyone. She would either be silent and spaced out or manic, hearing voices, getting great ideas by the bushelful. Bernard, I slowly discovered, could behave very differently towards different people at one and the same time—even on the same occasion. With people he was on the verge of breaking with, Paul Bertram and Bob Garis for example, he could be quite mad: screaming, red-faced, totally out of control. Then he could turn to me and resume the orderly, civilized conversation he had put aside to scream at them. I came to feel that Bernard's madness was like a beacon that slowly swept the landscape of his friends. Sooner or later, it would probably focus on you. When it did, there was nothing for it but to cut your losses and get out—painful as that undeniably was.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

V

While all this had been going on, I had been getting more and more interested in music history. The books I had written about for *Hudson Review*—Mellers's *Music in a New Found Land*, Joseph Kerman's *The Beethoven Quartets*, and Gunther Schuller's *Early Jazz*—had led me to think hard about the problems of doing music history, and in particular about how to solve the problem that Haggin had more or less claimed was insoluble: how to see musical works in their totality as works of art and yet also as facts of history—whether the history of their composer's career, the culture of their age, or a particular style or genre.

Therefore when I heard about Rosen's *The Classical Style*, I knew it was a book I not only had to read but also had to review—so that I would be forced to learn as much as possible from it. This was in the summer of 1971, just as things were souring with Haggin, and so I wrote directly to Fred Morgan, the magazine's editor, to ask if I might write about the Rosen book for *Hudson*. Initially he rejected my suggestion, saying that the book was too technical for *Hudson*'s readers. I was disappointed but thought little more about it. Then the following April he wrote me to say that he had been on the committee that had given a National Book Award to *The Classical Style*, and that he now saw he had been wrong about it. It was indeed a book for *Hudson*'s readers, and I was welcome to review it.

We were at Nantucket that summer, and I spent much of my time taking notes on Rosen's book and writing my review. It was as difficult as anything I had ever taken on: my notes ran to seventeen single-spaced typed pages, and my review went through seven drafts before it seemed right to me. Morgan very kindly let me have extra time, and I did not send it in until July, too late for the autumn issue. But he was enthusiastic in his praise, finding the review "brilliant, excellent," a "very perceptive piece of work on an extremely demanding book." Much to my relief, he even said he "wouldn't want to cut it at all"—despite the fact that it was well over the specified length. Since the next deadline was not until September, I tinkered a bit more with it over the next couple of months.

Because I had worked so hard on the piece, I was not only angry but also alarmed when Charley Blyth told me that summer that Haggin was now demanding that Morgan let him review *The Classical Style* for *Hudson*, pulling rank on me by airily telling Morgan he could simply tell me that he no longer needed my review. But when Haggin submitted his "Music and Ballet Chronicle" with eleven of its fifteen pages devoted to an intemperate attack on Rosen's book, Morgan

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

objected. Haggin then, as Morgan told me later, "went haywire," screaming accusations and, in effect, telling Morgan how to run his magazine. At this point, Morgan, too, had had enough, and he told Haggin he wanted no more of him or his writing.

Haggin did eventually publish his review of Rosen in the *Sewanee Review*, and when he reprinted it in his 1973 collection *A Decade of Music*, he appended an extraordinary note in which he told his side of the story. He claimed to have been interested in reviewing the Rosen book as early as April 1971, when it was first published, and in fact to have been sent a review copy—which, however, he somehow did not get around to reading until the summer of 1972. But Morgan assured me that Haggin did not express an interest in *The Classical Style* until he heard that I was reviewing it and would probably review it favorably. For Haggin, too, had a book in competition for the National Book Award, his 1971 *Ballet Chronicle*, and he was furious that he had lost out to Rosen, whose book he considered unworthy of such an award because (as Morgan had also supposed at first) it was too technical for the general reader. So he had a score to settle with Rosen as well as with me.

I have no reason whatever to doubt Fred Morgan's story, and many reasons to doubt Haggin's. Not only is it most unlikely that he would have let rest, unread, for more than a year a book he was genuinely interested in reviewing; it also seems unlikely that *The Classical Style* would have been of any interest to him had it not been for Rosen's award and for the fact that I was going to review it favorably in the *Hudson Review*—on what Haggin considered his turf. For *The Classical Style* is exactly the sort of long, intellectually complex book that he had not reviewed since his interest in theoretical questions dried up and he (quite wisely) decided to limit himself to practical criticism.

The picture Haggin painted of me in his appended note was of someone whose dominant interest was in "abstract, theoretic, conceptualizing thinking," and who had therefore been misled into imagining that mere general readers with an interest in music shared his theoretical inclinations and would thus be able to profit from Rosen's book—which, Haggin stoutly maintained, they would not. Of course the almost immediate reprinting of *The Classical Style* in paperback and the wide popularity it has enjoyed for a quarter-century have proved Haggin dead wrong.

I was amused to note that as support for this quite odd characterization of me Haggin disapprovingly cited my review of *Music Observed*, in which he said my theoretical interests had impelled me to concentrate on "the theoretic basis of my work . . . in disregard of one repeatedly expressed major idea underlying the writing: that the critic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must keep his eye strictly on the particular object before him, which in this instance was the particular pieces of writing in this book." At the time of that review, on the other hand, Bernard had written me: "In a note to Randall Jarrell after his *Nation* review of *Music in the Nation* I said it was worth the long hell it had been to write those articles to have them written about as he had done; and I feel that a hundred times more strongly about your review."

So B. H. Haggin had not only become someone with whom I could no longer deal on a personal basis; he had also, apparently, become what he himself most despised: a writer who would lie in his published writings. Although I was shocked and angry, I was not really surprised when, a few years later, my friend Mortimer H. Frank, a music critic with a strong interest in Toscanini, finally met Haggin and told me that Haggin had spent their whole time together ranting about what a dreadful person I was. I asked Mort what, aside from that, he had thought of Haggin, and he replied: "Absolutely loony, a real space cadet!" He then added that a few days later, perhaps feeling he had not made himself fully clear, Haggin sent a joint letter to him and to the friend who had taken him to see Haggin, explaining once again how dreadful I was. Out of understandable curiosity, and since the letter was obviously not a personal document, I asked for a copy of it. Mort had mislaid it, and didn't rediscover it for several years. When I finally did read it, I was amazed to see that Haggin accused me of being responsible for his being fired from his *Hudson Review* job! When I told this, in wonderment, to one of my Boston friends, he shrugged and said that Haggin had been telling everyone that for years.

At the time Haggin wrote that letter, in the late 1970s, both he and I were writing for the *New Republic.* He of course had been with them for several years, but I had only recently come on board. A colleague of mine who had read and liked my writing on music was a friend and former student of Roger Rosenblatt, at that time back-pages editor of the magazine, and he had recommended me to Rosenblatt. In his letter Haggin said that I had begun to write for the *New Republic* only in order to plague him, and that I had vowed to make his life hell by following him to any magazine he wrote for. I could not recall making any such vow. But I was sufficiently angered by the accusation to figure that if he really thought I was that bad, it would be a shame to disappoint him.

Several years later I was looking for a place to write about Joseph Kerman's *Contemplating Music.* In 1983 I had gone back to graduate school, at Brandeis, to earn a Ph.D. in musicology. Since Kerman's book was a sort of survey and appraisal of the state of the field, it was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

naturally of great interest to me. Also, I had a special interest in Kerman's work because I had been strongly influenced by his early *Opera as Drama* but very disappointed in *The Beethoven Quartets* when I had reviewed it for *Hudson. Contemplating Music* seemed wrong for the *Atlantic,* where I usually write about music rather than books on music. So I hit on the *Yale Review,* for which Haggin had for years written a quarterly records column. My review appeared right next to what turned out to be his second-to-last column. Unknown to me, Bernard was dying of colon cancer, and had decided he could no longer continue writing.

That pretty much ended my dealings, direct and indirect, with Bernard Haggin, who died in May 1987, at the age of eighty-six. Looking back, I find it strange how untouched the bitter and twisted end of our relation leaves my memory of the seventeen years during which we were the closest of friends. No one has had a greater influence on the way I think and write—not only about music, but about other subjects as well. At his best—and he was pretty consistently at his best during his good years—he set a standard for clarity and precision of thought and expression, for sharpness and accuracy of perception, and for knowing and demonstrating what's really important in music and in life, that remains unmatched in my experience.

The blurbs on some of Bernard's later books include a phrase about his having taught a whole generation of bright young people how to use their ears. That phrase was taken from a letter I had written him during the early years of our friendship. I was pleased that he wanted to use it because for me it summed up not only his greatest service but the greatest service that any music critic can perform. His native combativeness and the strength of his likes and dislikes gained him a lot of angry letters. But these qualities were part of what made him so appealing to younger readers. For intellectual adolescents don't want critics to be wise, urbane, above the battle; they want somebody who has very high standards, who loves to argue, and who seems worth arguing with. And that was Bernard.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Last Love

MICHAEL MILLER

When he covers her hand which is lying
On her lap with his large, heavy hand
And feels his body leaning toward her
On the bench in the nursing home garden,
He feels he is protecting her with his
Entire being that can stride before her,
Although he, like she, can only manage
A step without a walker and must wait
For help to rise from this bench where
He was gently placed in his ninetieth year
Which has brought him close to this woman
Whose delicate hand fits beneath his
Like a pea under a shell in the game
He played with his sister so many years ago.
And if he could speak he would tell her
How her hair, parted like white curtains,
Allows him to imagine that death is only
An opening in light which they can enter
Together, his hand still covering hers,
Though they have never spoken in the warm
Afternoons when he is placed beside her
Before returning to his separate room
Where he sits alone and tries to remember
What has passed miraculously between them.

✪ MICHAEL MILLER has published poems in the *Kenyon Review*, the *Sewanee Review*, the *New Republic*, and the *Southern Review*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Who Was Leo Strauss?

GREGORY BRUCE SMITH

More than twenty years after his death, Leo Strauss remains an enigmatic and controversial figure. Commentators, both friendly and hostile, have variously found the pivot point of Strauss's thought in a desired return to Greek thought—in some permutations complete with the elitism of the rule of philosopher-kings; or in a conservative defense of modern, liberal democracy, especially against Marxist communism; or in a furtive, esoteric, historicist, Nietzschean nihilism hidden behind a clever, rhetorical public teaching on the one hand, or in a dogmatic, hierarchical, inegalitarian understanding of unchanging Nature on the other; in the reflections of a fundamentally Jewish thinker, or in a Socratic skepticism; and on and on.

Since his death Strauss has even been attacked in the popular press, an odd phenomenon for a man who seldom declaimed in public and, despite a sense of professional obligation to his university and his students, clearly preferred the withdrawn, quiet, private, contemplative life. It would be difficult to find a man less likely to want to be a philosopher-king, or to want to have any public persona whatsoever. That Strauss has become so controversial has to be traced ultimately to the untimely nature of his thinking, and his willingness to question openly the philosophical orthodoxies of his time. But to an equal extent, the controversies surrounding Strauss must be traced to the idiosyncracies of unpredictable changes in moral, cultural, and political fashions. Because of the unpredictable nature of such fashions, how Strauss's influence will evolve in the future is difficult to predict.

✪ GREGORY BRUCE SMITH, Professor of Political Philosophy at Trinity College, is author of *Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Transition to Postmodernity.*

Leo Strauss was born in Kirchhain, Hessen, Germany, in 1899. He received a traditional gymnasium education. He reports that as a young man he read and re-read the works of Nietzsche. He was also much attracted to Zionism. After serving in the German army during World War I, he returned to study philosophy, mathematics, and natural science at the universities of Marburg, Frankfurt, Berlin, and Hamburg. Upon completing his formal education, he was a researcher in the reform institute for Jewish studies in Berlin, where he examined seventeenth-century biblical criticism, especially that of Spinoza. From these studies came Strauss's first major work, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion.* After completing his doctorate, Strauss sat in on the courses offered by the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), who was teaching at Freiburg. Husserl was famous for the philosophical injunction to get "to the things themselves," a premise that, in altered form, Strauss himself adopted. It was at Freiburg that Strauss also sat in on the courses of Husserl's assistant, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), whose influence on Strauss was far greater than is usually seen. Heidegger, like Nietzsche, had launched a theoretical critique of the origins of late-modern nihilism. In a parallel fashion, Strauss was much preoccupied with the "Crisis of the West."

In 1932 Strauss left Germany to avoid Nazi oppression, returning thereafter for only a brief period. After two years in France on a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship, and four lean years in England, he came to the United States in 1938, where he remained until his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

death in 1973. Between 1949 and 1968 Strauss taught political philosophy at the University of Chicago; there he wrote an impressive number of terse and intensely erudite books and articles about such authors as Aristophanes, Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Farabi, Maimonides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Nietzsche, and Husserl. Even a cursory attempt to confront these works presents one with themes that lie far from contemporary public debates: the relation between Reason and Revelation, the battle between the ancients and the moderns, the nature of esoteric philosophic writing, the origins of late-modern historicism. It is an odd legacy for such a man to have somehow become taken as the arch-enemy of democracy and be made responsible for controversial positions on everything from multiculturalism to Supreme Court nominations to debates about social justice.

It is always dangerous to try to deduce too much from the origins and personal history of a thinker. In the classic model of philosophy, especially as Strauss understood it, the thinker seeks to stand outside his place and time, not in order to negate the world he lives in but to gain the widest possible perspective on it. Strauss strove for that detachment. But he hardly could have avoided being influenced by his experience as a German Jew, born to an orthodox family. From the very beginning, Leo Strauss was a profound, fervent supporter of liberal democracy as the best political dispensation available in the modern world. He had seen the inadequacies of other modern regimes, such as fascism, at first hand, and he viewed communism as straightforward tyranny.

Strauss was especially impressed with the American variant of liberal democracy and studied its history, its Constitution, and the writings of its founders and statesmen. While he never wrote on these subjects, he saw a rare genius in the practice of American political life. But his scholarly work on modern political philosophy forced him to conclude that the modern philosophical premises that supported liberal democracy were inadequate; and if not transcended, they would weaken attachment to a fundamentally just and decent way of life. Beginning with his work on Hobbes—*The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, completed while he was still in England—and proceeding through his studies of Locke and Machiavelli, as well as in his pivotal *Natural Right and History*, Strauss tried to understand the essence of modern political philosophy and how it could lead to such radically different offspring as liberal democracy, fascism, and Marxist communism. Eventually Strauss was led back to Greek thought in hopes of finding an alternative to the nihilism he saw as implicit in modern thought. This led to his attempt to give life back to the confrontation between the ancients and the moderns. It is by addressing the major philosophical themes that occupied Strauss's scholarly efforts that his influence can be confronted at the deepest and least accidental level.

Strauss's scholarly work initially tried to confront the nihilism of what he would eventually call the "third wave of modernity" by addressing itself to that component of Nietzsche's claim that "God is dead," which implied that belief in a transcendent God and His revelations had become impossible for future humanity. In *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, Strauss tried to show that none of the modern critiques of the possibility of revealed religion was definitive. Thus the possibility of taking revealed religion and its wisdom seriously remained open. From Spinoza, Strauss was led to the great medieval Jewish thinker Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), whom Spinoza had taken as one of his major opponents. It was from Maimonides that Strauss learned about the esoteric or secret writing that became one of his major scholarly themes. Thereafter, he never left behind the question of the relation between Reason and Revelation, or "Athens and Jerusalem."

In the face of late-modern irrationalism, which he saw as the inevitable outcome of modern rationalism, Strauss also tried to reconsider the other central component of Western civilization, Greek rationalism. He repeatedly made clear that the heart and soul of Western civilization was to be found in the irresolvable tension between Revelation and Rationalism. Strauss's argument was that the modern philosophical attacks on Reason and Revelation were not conclusive; he never claimed much more certainty than that. Strauss hoped to reopen questions that had been presumed conclusively closed. He did not presume to substitute a new closure for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that openness. Despite his discussions of Natural Right and Natural Law, Strauss never asserted the existence of rigid moral absolutes. It is especially paradoxical, therefore, that Strauss should be seen as a dogmatic partisan.

Strauss did make clear, however, that in his mind the viability of Western civilization—with Western liberal democracy being one of its central components—rested on the ever-renewed reinvigoration of the West's distinctive tension between Reason and Revelation. Both were under assault in his time. Strauss was equally clear that the tension could never be resolved in favor of either Reason or Revelation. In general terms, Strauss encouraged an openness to this tension, not dogmatism or irrationalism—or what comes close to the same thing as irrationalism, secret writing and esoteric misdirection.

Modern philosophy and modern political philosophy had attempted to transcend both Greek rationalism and biblical Revelation. Strauss invested a major part of his scholarly life in trying to understand the nature of the break modernity attempted. He eventually concluded that the primary change that took place at the dawn of modernity was a moral change—one that rested on a transformed conception of the good for mankind. From the beginning, and this could be seen clearly in Machiavelli, the moderns tried to "lower the sights." Rather than aim at the grand and inspiring virtues that pre-modern thought—in both its Greek and biblical variants—took as the appropriate end of political action, the moderns were prepared to emancipate and channel the spontaneously occurring passions and emotions, among them fear, ambition, and greed. The hope was that a more accessible and egalitarian goal could be substituted for the grand aims of the pre-moderns, which ultimately were accessible only to a few.

The moderns came to see comfort, affluence, and the avoidance of death as fundamental to the good life, secured by a new science that saw its end not as perfecting the rational faculty by striving for understanding but as gaining power over nature. The good life, they claimed, could be actualized for all in a prosperous society supported by modern science. The pre-moderns rejected, before the fact, this idea of the good because they saw human desires as unlimited. Hence prosperity alone would not make human beings happy; it would merely lead to the invention of new desires, an endless round whereby human beings would become moral slaves. Further, the mere possession of scientific power, without knowledge of ends other than vulgar hedonism, could never be a simple good. In fact, such power could transform itself into a threat to our very humanity. The reduction of humanity to desirous slaves armed with a powerful new science pointed toward a never before seen tyranny rather than emancipation—a conclusion reached by many on both the right and the left.

Less visibly, Strauss also confronted the philosophical component of modernity posited by Descartes. To lay the foundation for the new science that could master nature, Cartesian Idealism tried to abstract from the data of the senses and ground itself in the thinking self, or the abstract ego. From the beginning, the moderns doubted the reliability of the data of the senses as well as the veracity of common sense or "the way things appear for all"—what Strauss came to call the natural, pre-theoretical, or pre-scientific articulation of things. It was necessary for the moderns, therefore, to substitute conscious theoretical constructions for the natural awareness present to all in everyday life. Much of Strauss's scholarly labors went into an attempt to transcend this modern "constructivism" and find a way back to what he believed was the natural articulation of reality.

For Strauss, modern political philosophy had by stages moved from a more or less benign beginning to a final intensification and radicalization in late modernity. An initial peak was reached in Lockean liberal democracy, which represented the culmination of the first wave of modernity. But with the thought of Rousseau, modern political philosophy took a more radical turn and Strauss's second wave was initiated. The first wave of modernity still believed in the existence of a fixed human nature that had to be accommodated because it could not be transcended. It saw quitting the natural condition as good, but nature still remained as a guide or limit for human affairs. Strauss's second wave posited the malleability, changeability, and historicality of human existence. In doing so, Rousseau initiated an understanding that, after passing through Kant, culminated in Hegel's depiction of an inevitable movement

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of history that brought with it an inevitable transformation of man and of the natural environment. This "progressive" understanding—shared by Marx—saw human history as linear, inevitable, and moving from lower to higher stages.

With the commencement of Strauss's third wave of modernity, faith in the changeability and historicality of human existence remained but was now stripped of any linearity, necessity, or progressivity. This was the wave initiated by Friedrich Nietzsche. With Nietzsche, the problem Strauss designated "historicism" raised its head. Nietzsche asserted that all knowledge—especially of good and evil—was dependent upon the altogether arbitrary historical perspective into which one was thrown. And all perspectives were transitory. With Nietzsche, history came to be accidental in its unfolding, if not regressive and nihilistic. All past understandings of reality came to be seen as merely human constructions, albeit unconscious ones. But with the insight that all past conceptions of reality were merely human constructions came the possibility that in the future those constructions could be consciously willed. The third wave brought with it the age of what Nietzsche called the politics of the Will to Power—actually competing wills to power with no possible arbiter other than force more or less overtly deployed. Everyone would compete to posit his construction of reality—a fundamental premise that underlies many contemporary phenomena.

Malleable man himself could now be consciously transformed. But there was no guidance for this transformation other than an entirely arbitrary contest of wills, eventually won by the momentarily strongest. With this premise, Strauss believed that Nietzsche opened the door to Heidegger's even more thoroughgoing historicism, where faith in the self-conscious will waned, to be replaced by the hegemony of the blind, overpowering fate and destiny of the nihilism of universal, global, technological civilization. And after Heidegger, Strauss predicted that we would see the spectacle of even more radical relativisms—which would have been Strauss's understanding of everything from deconstructionism to various forms of feminism.

According to Strauss, the inevitable outcome of modern thought was a humanity that no longer believed in Divine Revelation, eternal Nature, or inevitable History as providing any standards for judgment. In such an intellectual environment, Strauss believed that liberal democracy, despite all its practical decency, would come to be seen as just one moral and political dispensation among many, and theoretically no better than its alternatives. Strauss believed that this would inevitably sap the commitment to liberal democracy that was needed in the face of the immoderate political dispensations that were the result of the second and third waves of modernity—communism and fascism respectively.

Strauss dedicated his mature scholarly efforts to trying to find a non-historicist alternative that could help provide the basis for a defense for liberal democracy that he thought could not be found within modern thought. In this search he turned to a painstaking attempt to understand those non-historicist Greek authors at the origins of the Western philosophic tradition in hopes that they would provide insights into how to transcend our late-modern impasse. This led to Strauss's most mature works on Thucydides, Aristophanes, Xenophon, Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, works that have to a significant degree been ignored by both the scholars and Strauss's polemical detractors.

Strauss had discovered the idea of esoteric writing in his studies of Maimonides, so that when he went back to the Greeks to find an alternative to late-modern irrationalism, he arrived at a very novel reading of Plato—in his mind a more authentic understanding of Plato than that contained in conventional, Anglo-American scholarship. When reflecting on the esoteric writing style of Plato, Strauss reached a slightly different conclusion than in his studies of Maimonides. Instead of concentrating on the confrontation between philosophy and revealed religion, Plato dealt with the tension between open philosophical inquiry and the needs of a closed political community. Political communities, according to Strauss's Plato, were always closed and particular and could not withstand the glare of the universal truth, which was the object of philosophy. Political communities were caves; philosophers longed to transcend the cave. This unavoidable tension between political life and philosophy—after all, the Athenians had condemned

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Socrates to death—led Plato to use the dialogue form, embellished by beautiful myths, as his distinctive mode of speech.

Similarly, Strauss applied his understanding of esoteric writing to the texts of Farabi (873–950), the Islamic medieval philosopher par excellence. Strauss's Farabi also saw the need to adopt an esoteric mode of speech and engage in secret writing. He used yet another set of devices to confront his special environment. Strauss's conclusion seems to have been that different environments required the use of different literary devices, which were needed to accomplish the same end of simultaneously speaking to different audiences while conveying more than one message—but not for the sake of conveying the identical message.

Yet it was the Greek authors who remained central for Strauss. When the Greek philosophers were read carefully, Strauss thought that they offered a non-historicist alternative to the nihilism encountered by late-modern thought. The moderns had constructed an abstract relation to life; Strauss believed that the ancient Greeks were still in contact with a rich, concrete, and "natural" understanding of life. Strauss saw in the Socratic dialectical method—which begins from concrete questions and answers—the only way of approaching that concrete richness without destroying it. Hence much of Strauss's later scholarly work centered on an attempt to understand Socrates and what his new philosophic method represented, approached not only from the perspective of Plato, but through the eyes of such contemporaries as Aristophanes and Xenophon.

For Strauss, the Platonic dialogues were not primarily ontological or metaphysical documents but rich articulations about the things that interest human beings most, including the nature of the best life and the best regime, the meaning of virtue, the possibility of happiness. In the Platonic dialogues, one finds the presentation of various distinctive kinds of lives, all of which present themselves as the best—the private life of virtue, the public life of the statesman or sophist, the life of philosophy, the life devoted to physical pleasure, and so on. Since there were different political communities, political life also came to light as a debate between different regimes, each pursuing a different conception of the good. In Strauss's understanding, nature articulates itself through different human beings with different aspirations, and through different regimes that prefer different ends. Within these natural limits, life presents *itself*—without the imposition of willed human constructions. The modern attempt to transcend these limits using constructivist interventions ultimately led to an alienated and nihilistic life within a very abstract world. Strauss concluded that the ancient Greeks demonstrated that there was an unchanging, natural articulation of reality that could be recovered. When this task of recovery was accomplished, it would become apparent that there were always a number of unchanging givens that could nonetheless be ordered in a variety of ways. It was the diverse, natural, human possibilities, not a specific ordering of those possibilities, that Strauss wanted to recover.

According to Strauss, the nature of the best regime depends on the circumstances. Strauss believed that the Greeks had adequately articulated the essence of our various natural perceptions and aspirations. They did not necessarily offer the best articulation of all possibilities, an issue that cannot be addressed except in light of present circumstances. What is always needed is flexibility; there is no one best regime everywhere and always, but there are natural possibilities that should always be allowed to manifest themselves. Hence, in *Natural Right and History*, Strauss tried to differentiate his understanding of a flexible "Natural Right" teaching from the more dogmatic and rigid "Natural Law" teachings of such philosophers as Aquinas and Hobbes.

Strauss argued for the need to recover a Socratic, dialectical understanding of philosophy, which when turned loose on a transformed modern world—transformed, as Strauss argued repeatedly, by the successes of modern political philosophy—would yield entirely different theoretical articulations than those reached by previous thinkers.

We cannot reasonably expect that a fresh understanding of classical political philosophy will supply us with recipes for today's use. For the relative success of modern political philosophy has brought into being a kind of society wholly unknown to the classics, a kind of society to which the classical principles as stated and elaborated by the classics are not immediately applicable. Only we living today can possibly find a solution

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the problems of today. But an adequate understanding of the principles as elaborated by the classics may be the indispensable *starting point* for an adequate analysis, to be achieved by us, of present-day society in its peculiar character, and for the wise application, to be achieved by us, of these principles to our tasks.

Strauss believed that there was a natural fabric to human existence, even though late-modern human beings had become alienated from it. But that natural articulation of reality was not always operative or immediately available at all times. This understanding represented Strauss's more concrete manifestation of the Heideggerian thought contained in the idea of "the withdrawal of Being." Strauss was explicit that late-modern life was *contra naturum.* His was a scholarly attempt to open a path to a recovery of what had become substantially absent for his contemporaries. This experience of absence was one that Strauss ironically shared with a diverse group of thinkers that included not only Heidegger but many of Heidegger's descendants down to Jacques Derrida, the father of deconstructionism. But Strauss's response was far more concrete.

Strauss first became controversial among academics in the 1950s as part of his critique of the then dominant behavioralism in the social sciences, especially as it manifested itself in academic political science, which, technically, was Strauss's departmental home. Behavioralist political science began from the modern Cartesian premise that in order to understand political life it was necessary to project consciously constructed, "scientific" categories in place of the categories that arise in the marketplace of everyday, commonsense discussion. Strauss tried to show—especially in his essay "Epilogue"—that the behavioralist attempt to substitute an "objective," scientific account of reality for the one embedded in common sense was a mistake. Far from arriving at an understanding that was deeper and more profound, this undertaking was trivial, reductionist and distorting. It could never arrive at the scientific detachment and objectivity it desired, because it always began by taking for granted commonsense, pre-theoretical presuppositions from which it could never emancipate itself. This was the basis of Strauss's critique of the dominant fact-value dichotomy. There are no such things as value-free facts. Facts first present themselves to us as part of our acting, doing, and making, which are always evaluative. Without this evaluative, commonsense criteria of relevance embedded in our shared experience, no science could ever judge the difference between the relevant and the trivial.

According to Strauss, our primary, natural relation to life is always determined by the regime in which we live and by our shared understandings of the just, the noble, and the good—especially as those principles are articulated in constitutions, public documents, and the speeches of great statesmen. This natural world is better understood by citizens and statesmen than it is by detached scientific observers. Strauss concluded that, far from being superior to the older political science that emanated from Aristotle and included the traditional political philosophers, the new political science was in fact not only trivial, but deluded about its own foundations and ultimately incapable of clarity. All it could do was undermine the pre-scientific perspective shared by citizens.

With these arguments, Strauss first came to be seen as a conservative. Behavioralist political science was almost exclusively the preserve of a liberal academic establishment. It was a method by which all substantive moral debates could be put aside in favor of discussing the means to ends that were already built into the political system. It represented a surreptitious way of defending a moral position without having to do so substantively. Having presupposed one's understanding of the best life and the best regime—the modern progressivist understanding—one tried to limit debate to allegedly factual observations. It is no small irony that, after Strauss had made his critique of behavioralism, a similar critique was made by the New Left, which was that behavioralist political science operated under a hidden conservative agenda. This is only one among many areas where Strauss made common cause with thinkers customarily seen to be of the left.

According to Strauss, the real danger of behavioralist political science was that it shielded itself from the truly fundamental questions of the day. For those who lived in the West, especially after World War II, everyday political reality was determined by the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

confrontation between liberal democracy and Marxist despotism. Only by an abstraction that led in the direction of less rather than more clarity could one conclude, as behavioralist political science did, that the difference between democracy and totalitarianism was a difference between quantums of coercion, or a difference in the nature of the group interactions that determined policy.

Despite his profound respect for Heidegger's philosophical mind, Strauss ultimately offered a criticism of his thought similar to that which he made of behavioralism. Heidegger had reached the conclusion that the liberal democratic West and the Marxist communist East—"Washington and Moscow"—were "metaphysically equal." For Strauss, this abstract conclusion was an affront to what was obvious—the clear superiority of living in a liberal democracy rather than a Marxist despotism. According to Strauss, our natural, pretheoretical, commonsense relation to reality had to be defended and its primacy had to be justified and taken seriously. If there is one key that unlocks Strauss's difficult corpus, it is to be found in his attempt to show the priority of an unchanging, albeit very diverse, natural, pre-theoretical articulation of reality. And for Strauss that always meant the fundamentally political and moral way in which reality is revealed to all.

By contrast, for Heidegger our pre-theoretical relation to reality is determined by a series of fated worldviews that come and go mysteriously and unpredictably. For Strauss, this was pure relativism. Despite his respect for Heidegger's philosophical depth, Heidegger remained for Strauss the ultimate historicist. Just as he had tried to confront the relativism of the fact-value dichotomy of social science behavioralism, Strauss tried to confront the historicism that he saw as the ultimate and inevitable outcome of modern thought. But in many ways, his confrontation with historicism was far more provisional. First, he tried to show how historicism evolved necessarily from previous moments in modern thought. While the first and second waves of modernity were less virulent, they led, unavoidably, to the third historicist moment, and so consequently it was not feasible to simply go back to one of the prior moments of modern thought. Strauss further tried to show that on its own terms historicism had not made a case for its superiority to non-historicist thought. It need not, therefore, be taken as the dogmatic given that it had become for so many of Strauss's contemporaries—a veritable legion since his death.

But Strauss never presumed to have simply transcended historicism; there remain historicist components in Strauss's thought. For example, he never gives any simple invocation of a nature that is always operative. For Strauss, nature does not operate as simple mechanical causality, and it is never immediately available—in the manner of the color green—without study. In fact, there are ages like our own during which nature is occluded and, thereby, to a significant extent inoperative. This is why it was so important for Strauss to try to recover an understanding of the Greek writers who remained in closer touch with nature than the late moderns. This was the basis of Strauss's veneration of the "Great Books." They provide access to experiences that have been lost as well as to a serious debate about the alternate conclusions regarding the nature of the best life, alternatives that had ceased to be part of present debates.

While not being a simple ahistoricist, Strauss nevertheless saw radical historicism as the greatest problem confronting contemporary humanity. It constituted what he meant by the "Crisis of the West." According to Strauss, that crisis consisted of the West no longer being able to take itself and its aspirations seriously. Transcending radical historicism was for Strauss the highest task, but that could not be done by rhetoric, mythmaking, or esoteric misdirection—as many of Strauss's detractors claim was his intention. Historicism could only be transcended by engaging in the painstaking scholarly reconstructions that could help us give concrete articulation to the vague intimations with which we are left. Strauss may have been wrong in his perception of our time and of what was required to transcend it, but he never fell back on the abject banality of believing that late modernity could be overcome by what amounted to clever lies.

Like so many twentieth-century thinkers, Leo Strauss's critique of modernity remains far clearer and more telling than the alternative he offers. In the last analysis, I believe Strauss has no concrete recipes to offer. His

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

detractors, and some of his sympathizers, have constructed far more concrete positions for him than he himself would have been willing to accept. But it is around issues concerning the place of religion in Strauss's teaching and his rediscovery of esoteric or secret writing that most of the wilder and more polemical claims brought against him can be found—down to the accusations that Strauss ultimately is an atheist who nonetheless thought it was necessary for the non-philosophic to be told various religious fictions by an elite to keep them in line. Even some of Strauss's students seem to have arrived at a similar point that stresses the central importance of *civil* religion, which says more about his students than about Strauss.

Further, many have concluded—detractors and admirers alike—that a man who spent so much time pointing out the esoteric techniques of others must have written esoterically himself. They have similarly concluded that Strauss must have done so for the same reasons as those who operated in entirely different environments: in other words, primarily because of the inexorable tension between political life and philosophy that Strauss attributed to Plato; or the inexorable tension between philosophy and revealed religion that he found operating in Maimonides; or the need to keep unpalatable moral truths silent, as did Machiavelli. And, they conclude, he must have used the same devices they used. If this is true, Strauss must have had all the subtlety of a magician who explains his trick before performing it. If Strauss was actually engaged in esoteric speech, his real message absolutely must have been something other than what he asserted quite openly. His revelation of previous reasons for esotericism, and previous devices used, must have been the smoke screen under which he hid his deeper truths.

In the present world, where everything is said openly, only an extreme paranoid could think he might be persecuted for observing with Plato that there was a tension between philosophy and politics, or with Maimonides that there was a tension between philosophy and religion. In the contemporary West, we live at a time when we do not have closed political communities, God has been openly proclaimed dead, simple hedonism is advanced as the good life, and many assert we have arrived at the end of philosophy. Precisely what devastating truth is still to be revealed that is not already part of the public domain? That certain realities in Athens, medieval Europe, or Islam, early modernity, or whenever, led to esoteric writing for previous writers seems irrelevant in our changed circumstance. I do not know if Strauss had an esoteric teaching. But I am confident that if he did, his detractors—and more than a few of his admirers—have been taken in by his surface teaching. With more partisanship than insight or honesty, many have laboriously dug up Strauss's perfectly obvious surface teaching and proclaimed it his great secret, or reveled in saying that the sphinx had no secret.

There is no doubt that Strauss was a fervent defender of liberal commercialism. This alone made him anathema to many on the left. That they would search for reasons to attack him—no matter how implausible—is understandable. Strauss certainly ran against the tide of the dominant progressive intellectual currents of his time, all of which accepted uncritically the doctrine that history moves in a linear fashion, with later stages being necessarily more complete and higher than those that had gone before. This notion allowed many to be sympathetic to the claims of not only democratic socialism but also Marxist communism as being higher stages of social and political evolution since they came after the emergence of liberal capitalism. It was even common to see some intellectuals overlook the realities of Stalinist oppression and be mesmerized by the claims of their abstract theory of history. Strauss simply had no patience with the kind of thinking that could so theoretically anesthetize itself that it emerged intellectually numb to obvious oppression and brutality. For many, Strauss was seen, therefore, to make common cause with the devil. If the progressivist view of democracy was the only plausible one, anyone who questioned it must be anti-democratic. That the more fashionable post-modernist Left has come to question those same progressivist presuppositions as did Strauss is another interesting irony.

In this regard, it is pertinent to recall Strauss's famous exchange with Alexandre Kojève, a Russian émigré who settled in Paris at about the time Strauss passed through on the way to the United States. He and Strauss met there

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

before World War II and kept up an active correspondence thereafter. Strauss considered him a significant thinker and sent several of his students to seek out Kojève. Kojève gave a series of influential lectures on Hegel that were attended by seemingly everyone who became anyone in French academic circles from the 1930s to the 1980s. He developed a unique reading of Hegel that accepted that the end of history had arrived: the final wisdom had been revealed, if not totally actualized; all coherent aspirations could now be satisfied. According to Kojève, the only conclusion that could be reached was that all societies would now strive to actualize the modern, liberal, commercial, bureaucratic state. The outcome would be a cosmopolitan world society along the lines of secular, Western, bureaucratic, technological, liberal, commercial societies.

Strauss concluded that such a universal, cosmopolitan society, far from opening the possibility of a truly human, satisfying existence, created the specter of a universal tyranny in which all man's higher, natural possibilities and aspirations would be strangled. Such a state would have far more resources at its command than Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia and would leave no oases for émigrés. For Strauss a world state would at best be prone to the creeping conformism and gentle slide into "soft despotism" that Tocqueville envisioned, or, at worst, Nietzsche's nightmare of a future dominated by the "last man" who aspires to nothing other than comfortable self-preservation. Strauss did not believe that such a state was possible. But even if it were, it did not represent a coherent object of aspiration.

Strauss's critique of the end of history thesis—long before Francis Fukuyama brought the subject to public attention—was simultaneously a critique of the modern, cosmopolitan aspirations of the dominant progressivism that accepted a cosmopolitan outcome as the only rational object of political and moral striving. Strauss's objections were taken as prima facia evidence of his anti-progressive and therewith reactionary and anti-democratic tendencies. It was assumed by proponents of progressivist cosmopolitanism that the only alternative to their view was a narrow, parochial, ethnic nationalism, which was defined as, in principle, fascistic. But Strauss did not accept that a cosmopolitan/fascist dichotomy exhausted the available options. He was a proponent of neither. Strauss becomes a reactionary, anti-Enlightenment conservative only for those incapable of escaping the cosmopolitan/fascist dichotomy—a dichotomy that unfortunately remains all too prevalent.

The extent to which a teacher should be held responsible for the deeds of his students or disciples is an open question. Serious thinkers frequently die the death of a thousand students. Since it is impossible for even the greatest of teachers to predict who their disciples will be or in what direction they will strike off, it would seem unreasonable to hold a teacher responsible for everyone who claimed to have been influenced by him. Yet Strauss has been blamed for all manner of things said by his students. Those students have struck off in a variety of directions to explore a variety of themes that Strauss opened up. Even a cursory glance at the work of the so-called Straussians shows such diversity, to say nothing of disagreement, that, at the very least, the Straussians represent a very factious "cult" possessed of an extremely lax policing mechanism.

So diverse are Strauss's students that some have taken his argument for the superiority of Aristotelian political science to its contemporary, behavioralist successor as a simple endorsement of Aristotle as having arrived at the final wisdom. Others, taking off from his observation that the first wave of modernity was more commonsensical than what followed, have tried to reappropriate first-wave authors like Locke and Montesquieu as exemplary of a final wisdom. To put the matter succinctly, Strauss's students include proponents respectively of both the ancients and the moderns. Other Straussians try to generate grand syntheses whereby Locke, for example, is transformed into an Aristotelian. Still others argue that a pastiche of ancient rationalism and modern republicanism can somehow be constructed. Still others see Strauss as a primarily Jewish, religious thinker and plumb those aspects of his work. Some Straussians are ardent supporters of liberal bourgeois civilization; others are critics in the mode of Tocqueville or Nietzsche. In the last analysis, an honest observer would have to conclude that it is impossible to find a unified doctrine lurking in the work of Strauss's students. What one sees

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is a very diverse body of philosophical literature. Again, what is shared are questions, not answers. Those who thought a great number of those questions had been answered or transcended have not been pleased to see them reopened. That explains a significant part of the hostility to Strauss and his students.

When one looks at Strauss's own large and complicated corpus, one primarily sees a great number of novel thought experiments. One sees a questioning of accepted orthodoxies and a desire to try to approach the phenomena of human existence afresh. That is the philosophic longing that must be ever re-enacted as long as we remain merely mortal beings. That questioning is a sign of the ability to exist in the tension of openness that exhilarates us all, but which, unfortunately, few of us are capable of sustaining for any extended period of time. Philosophic questioning manifests itself in a refusal either to be dogmatic or to give in to a skepticism that is dogmatically relativist.

Leo Strauss reopened many questions that had been presumed closed once and for all. One pays deference to the legacy of Strauss by keeping the questions open, not by trying dogmatically to close them anew. Strauss's thinking points toward a high-level, serious skepticism, albeit absolutely not the kind of skepticism that moves from the openness and tension appropriate to a serious questioning to the banal, flaccid somnambulism of everyday, garden-variety relativism. In the modern world, such philosophical skepticism will not destroy moral and political commitment; the fact that we do not know everything does not mean that we do not know anything.

No serious thinker ever has or ever will be suffered gladly by those who have already arrived at their final truths. From beginning to end, Leo Strauss was an iconoclast and an enigma. He will no doubt remain both as he will no doubt remain controversial. His ultimate influence is impossible to predict. But continuing, open-minded discussion seems to me to constitute the appropriate legacy for such a thinker.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When Did Modern Science Begin?

EDWARD GRANT

Although science has a long history with roots in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, it is indisputable that modern science emerged in Western Europe and nowhere else. The reasons for this momentous occurrence must, therefore, be sought in some unique set of circumstances that differentiate Western society from other contemporary and earlier civilizations. The establishment of science as a basic enterprise within a society depends on more than expertise in technical scientific subjects, experiments, and disciplined observations. After all, science can be found in many early societies. In Islam, until approximately 1500, mathematics, astronomy, geometric optics, and medicine were more highly developed than in the West. But science was not institutionalized in Islamic society. Nor was it institutionalized in ancient and medieval China, despite significant achievements. Similar arguments apply to all other societies and civilizations. Science can be found in many of them but was institutionalized and perpetuated in none.

Why did science as we know it today materialize only in Western society? What made it possible for science to acquire prestige and influence and to become a powerful force in Western Europe by the seventeenth century? The answer, I believe, lies in certain fundamental events that occurred in Western Europe during the period from approximately 1175 to 1500. Those events, taken together, should be viewed as forming the foundations of modern science, a judgment that runs counter to prevailing scholarly opinion, which holds that modern science emerged in the seventeenth century by repudiating and abandoning medieval science and natural philosophy, the latter based on the works of Aristotle.

The scientific revolution appeared first in astronomy, cosmology, and physics in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Whether or not the achievements of medieval science exercised any influence on these developments is irrelevant. What must be emphasized, however, is that the momentous changes in the exact sciences of physics and astronomy that epitomized the scientific revolution did not develop from a vacuum. They could not have occurred without certain foundational events that were unique products of the late Middle Ages. To realize this, we must inquire whether a scientific revolution could have occurred in the seventeenth century if the level of science in Western Europe had remained much as it was in the first half of the twelfth century, before the transformation that occurred as a consequence of a great wave of translations from the Greek and Arabic languages into Latin that began around 1150 and continued on to the end of the thirteenth century. Could a scientific revolution have occurred in the seventeenth century if the immense translations of Greco-Arabic (or Greco-Islamic) science and natural philosophy into Latin had never taken place? Obviously not. Without those translations, many centuries would have been required before Western Europe could have reached the level of Greco-Arabic science. Instead of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, our descendants might look back upon a "Scientific Revolution of the Twenty-first Century." But the translations did occur in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and so did a

✪ EDWARD GRANT is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History and Philosophy of Science at Indiana University, Bloomington.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scientific revolution in the seventeenth century. It follows that something happened between, say, 1175 and 1500 that paved the way for that scientific revolution. What that "something" was is my subject here.

To describe how the late Middle Ages in Western Europe played a role in producing the scientific revolution in the physical sciences during the seventeenth century, two aspects of science need to be distinguished, the contextual and the substantive. The first—the contextual—involves changes that created an atmosphere conducive to the establishment of science, made it feasible to pursue science and natural philosophy on a permanent basis, and made those pursuits laudable activities within Western society. The second aspect—the substantive—pertains to certain features of medieval science and natural philosophy that were instrumental in bringing about the scientific revolution.

The creation of an environment in the Middle Ages that eventually made a scientific revolution possible involved at least three crucial preconditions. The first of these was the translation of Greco-Arabic science and natural philosophy into Latin during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Without this initial, indispensable precondition, the other two might not have occurred. With the transfer of this large body of learning to the Western world, the old science of the early Middle Ages was overwhelmed and superseded. Although modern science might eventually have developed in the West without the introduction of Greco-Arabic science, its advent would have been delayed by centuries.

The second precondition was the formation of the medieval university, with its corporate structure and control over its varied activities. The universities that emerged by the thirteenth century in Paris, Oxford, and Bologna were different from anything the world had ever seen. From these beginnings, the medieval university took root and has endured as an institution for some eight hundred years, being transformed in time into a worldwide phenomenon. Nothing in Islam or China, or India, or in the ancient civilizations of South America is comparable to the medieval university. It is in this remarkable institution, and its unusual activities, that the foundations of modern science must be sought.

The university was possible in the Middle Ages because the evolution of medieval Latin society allowed for the separate existence of church and state, each of which, in turn, recognized the independence of corporate entities, the university among them. The first universities, of Paris, Oxford, and Bologna, were in existence by approximately 1200, shortly after most of the translations had been completed. The translations furnished a ready-made curriculum to the emerging universities, a curriculum that was overwhelmingly composed of the exact sciences, logic, and natural philosophy.

The curriculum of science, logic, and natural philosophy established in the medieval universities of Western Europe was a permanent fixture for approximately 450 to 500 years. It was the curriculum of the arts faculty, which was the largest of the traditional four faculties of a typical major university, the others being medicine, theology, and law. Courses in logic, natural philosophy, geometry, and astronomy formed the core curriculum for the baccalaureate and master of arts degrees and were taught on a regular basis for centuries. These two arts degrees were virtual prerequisites for entry into the higher disciplines of law, medicine, and theology.

For the first time in the history of the world, an institution had been created for teaching science, natural philosophy, and logic. An extensive four-to-six-year course in higher education was based on those subjects, with natural philosophy as the most important component. As universities multiplied during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, the same science-natural philosophy-logic curriculum was disseminated throughout Europe, extending as far east as Poland.

The science curriculum could not have been implemented without the explicit approval of church and state. To a remarkable extent, both granted to the universities corporate powers to regulate themselves: universities had the legal right to determine their own curricula, to establish criteria for the degrees of their students, and to determine the teaching fitness of their faculty members.

Despite some difficulties and tensions between natural philosophy and theology—between, essentially, reason and revelation—arts masters and theologians at the universities welcomed the arrival of Aristotle's natural philosophy as evidenced by the central role they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gave it in higher education. Why did they do this? Why did a Christian society at the height of the Catholic Church's power readily adopt a pagan natural philosophy as the basis of a four-to-six-year education? Why didn't Christians fear and resist such pagan fare rather than embrace it?

Because Christians had long ago come to terms with pagan thought and were agreed, for the most part, that they had little or nothing to fear from it. The rapprochement between Christianity and pagan literature, especially philosophy, may have been made feasible by the slowness with which Christianity was disseminated. The spread of Christianity beyond the Holy Land and its surrounding region began in earnest after Saint Paul proselytized the Gentile world, especially Greece, during the middle of the first century. In retrospect—and by comparison with the spread of Islam—the pace of the dissemination of Christianity appears quite slow. Not until 300 A.D. was Christianity effectively represented throughout the Roman Empire. And not until 313, in the reign of Constantine, was the Edict of Milan (or Edict of Toleration) issued, which conferred on Christianity full legal equality with all other religions in the Empire. In 392, Christianity was made the state religion of the Roman Empire. In that year, the Emperor Theodosius ordered all pagan temples closed, and also prohibited pagan worship, thereafter classified as treason. Thus it was not until 392 that Christianity became the exclusive religion supported by the state. After almost four centuries of existence, Christianity was triumphant.

By contrast, Islam, following the death of Mohammad in 632, was carried over an enormous geographical area in a remarkably short time. In less than one hundred years, it was the dominant religion from the Arabian peninsula westward to the Straits of Gibraltar, northward to Spain and eastward to Persia, and beyond. But where Islam was largely spread by conquest during its first hundred years, Christianity spread slowly and, with the exception of certain periods of persecution, relatively peacefully. It was this slow percolation of Christianity that enabled it to come to terms with the pagan world and thus prepare itself for a role that could not have been envisioned by its early members.

The time it took before Christianity became the state religion enabled Christianity to adjust to the pagan society around it. In the second half of the third century, Christian apologists concluded that Christianity could profitably utilize pagan Greek philosophy and learning. In a momentous move, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215) and his disciple Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185–ca. 254) laid down the basic approach that others would follow. Greek philosophy, they argued, was not inherently good or bad, but one or the other depending on how it was used by Christians. Although the Greek poets and philosophers had not received direct revelation from God, they did receive natural reason and were therefore pointed toward truth. Philosophy—and secular learning in general—could thus be used to interpret Christian wisdom, which was the fruit of revelation. They were agreed that philosophy and science could be used as "handmaidens to theology"—that is, as aids to understanding Holy Scripture—an attitude that had already been advocated by Philo Judaeus, a resident of the Jewish community of Alexandria, early in the first century A.D.

The "handmaiden" concept of Greek learning became the standard Christian attitude toward secular learning by the middle of the fourth century. That Christians chose to accept pagan learning within limits was a momentous decision. They might have heeded the words of Tertullian (ca. 150–ca. 225), who asked pointedly: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?" With the total triumph of Christianity at the end of the fourth century, the Church might have reacted adversely toward Greek pagan learning in general, and Greek philosophy in particular, since there was much in the latter that was offensive to the Church. They might even have launched a major effort to suppress pagan thought as a danger to the Church and its doctrines. But they did not.

The handmaiden theory was obviously a compromise between the rejection of traditional pagan learning and its full acceptance. By approaching secular learning with caution, Christians could utilize Greek philosophy—especially metaphysics and logic—to better understand and explicate Holy Scripture and to cope with the difficulties generated by the assumption of the doctrine of the Trinity and other esoteric dogmas. Ordinary daily life also

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

required use of the mundane sciences such as astronomy and mathematics. Christians came to realize that they could not turn away from Greek learning.

When Christians in Western Europe became aware of Greco-Arabic scientific literature and were finally prepared to receive it in the twelfth century, they did so eagerly. They did not view it as a body of subversive knowledge. Despite a degree of resistance that was more intense at some times than at others, Aristotle's works were made the basis of the university curriculum by 1255 in Paris, and long before that at Oxford.

The emergence of a class of theologian-natural philosophers was the third essential precondition for the scientific revolution. Their major contribution was to sanction the introduction and use of Aristotelian natural philosophy in the curriculum of the new universities. Without that approval, natural philosophy and science could not have become the curriculum of the medieval universities. The development of a class of theologian-natural philosophers must be regarded as extraordinary. Not only did most theologians approve of an essentially secular arts curriculum, but they were convinced that natural philosophy was essential for the elucidation of theology. Students entering schools of theology were expected to have achieved a high level of competence in natural philosophy. Since a master of arts degree, or the equivalent thereof, signified a thorough background in Aristotelian natural philosophy, and since a master's degree in the arts was usually a prerequisite for admittance to the higher faculty of theology, almost all theologians can be said to have acquired extensive knowledge of natural philosophy. Many undoubtedly regarded it as worthy of study in itself and not merely because of its traditional role as the handmaiden of theology.

If theologians at the universities had chosen to oppose Aristotelian learning as dangerous to the faith, it could not have become the center of study at the university. But medieval theologians interrelated natural philosophy and theology with relative ease and confidence, whether this involved the application of science and natural philosophy to scriptural exegesis, the application of the concept of God's absolute power to hypothetical possibilities in the natural world, or the frequent invocation of scriptural texts to support or oppose scientific ideas and theories. Theologians rarely permitted theology to hinder their inquiries into the physical world. If there was any temptation to produce a "Christian science," they successfully resisted it. Although biblical texts were often cited in natural philosophy, they were not used to demonstrate scientific truths by appeal to divine authority.

The relatively small degree of trauma that accompanied Greco-Arabic science and natural philosophy into Western Europe, and the subsequent high status that science and natural philosophy achieved in Western thought, is attributable in no small measure to theologian-natural philosophers of this kind. Some of the most significant contributors to science and mathematics came from their ranks: Albertus Magnus, Robert Grosseteste, John Pecham, Theodoric of Freiberg, Thomas Bradwardine, Nicole Oresme, and Henry of Langenstein. Theologians used natural philosophy so extensively in their theological treatises that, from time to time, the Church had to admonish them to refrain from frivolously using natural philosophy to resolve theological problems. Although there were occasional theological reactions against natural philosophy—as in the early thirteenth century when Aristotle's works were banned for some years at Paris, and in the later thirteenth century when the bishop of Paris issued the Condemnation of 1277—they were relatively minor aberrations when viewed against the grand sweep and scope of the history of Western Christianity.

To appreciate the importance of a class of theologian-natural philosophers for the development of science and natural philosophy in the Latin West, one has only to compare the Western reception of natural philosophy with its treatment in the civilization of Islam, where religious authorities regarded the study of natural philosophy as potentially dangerous to the faith. Despite the fact that for many centuries—say, from the ninth to the end of the fifteenth—the level of science in the civilization of Islam, especially the exact sciences and medicine, far exceeded that of Western Europe, Aristotelian natural philosophy encountered many obstacles. Because of fears that natural philosophy might subvert the faith, and perhaps for other reasons as well, natural philosophy and also the exact sciences were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

never institutionalized in Islam and thus never made a regular part of the educational process.

By contrast, the universities that were founded in the West European Middle Ages preserved and enhanced natural philosophy. The university as we know it today was invented in the late Middle Ages. Universities were powerful and highly regarded institutions, corporate entities with numerous privileges that increased century by century. They were always there, dispensing natural philosophy and thereby keeping alive a tradition of scientific inquiry. Despite plagues, wars, and revolutions, they carried on, giving natural philosophy and science a sense of permanence. They could do so because the Church and its theologians, who were the guardians of dogma and doctrine, had acquiesced in the major role accorded to Aristotelian natural philosophy. For the first time in history, science and natural philosophy had a permanent institutional base. No longer was the preservation of natural philosophy left to the whims of fortune and to isolated teachers and students.

Without the development of these three preconditions, it is difficult to imagine how a scientific revolution could have occurred in the seventeenth century. Although these preconditions, permanent features of medieval society, were vital for the emergence of early modern science, and therefore qualify as foundational elements, they were not in themselves sufficient. The reasons why science took root in Western society must ultimately be sought in the nature of the science and natural philosophy that were developed.

If we leave medicine aside, science in the Middle Ages is appropriately divisible into two parts: the exact sciences (primarily mathematics, astronomy, and optics) and natural philosophy. Although the Latin Middle Ages preserved the major texts of the exact sciences in mathematics, astronomy, and optics, and even added to their sum total, I am unaware of any methodological or technical changes that proved to be significant for the scientific revolution. Preserving the texts, as well as studying them, and even writing new treatises on these subjects, was itself a major achievement. Not only did these activities keep the exact sciences alive, but they reveal the existence of a group of individuals who, during the medieval centuries, were competent in dealing with these sciences. At the very least, expertise in these sciences was maintained, so that the Copernicuses, Galileos, and Keplers of the new science had something to study, something to which they might react and alter for the better. Because the late Middle Ages is not highly regarded for its contributions to the exact sciences, let us concentrate on natural philosophy, where there were significant achievements.

The role of natural philosophy during the Middle Ages differed radically from that of the exact sciences. With natural philosophy, we are not concerned with the mere preservation of Greco-Arabic knowledge, but rather with the transformation of an inheritance into something ultimately beneficial for the development of early modern science. Natural philosophers in the arts faculties of the universities converted Aristotle's natural philosophy into a large number of questions that were put to nature on a range of subjects that eventually crystallized into specific sciences, among them physics, geology, meteorology, and others. To each of these questions, a yes or no reponse was usually required.

Within the format of a yes or no reply, however, scholastic authors presented numerous arguments and conclusions in defense of their different positions. Revolutionary changes occurred when the responses that were acceptable to natural philosophers in the Middle Ages were found inadequate by scholars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the end of the seventeenth century, new conceptions of physics, and of the cosmos as a whole, drastically altered natural philosophy. Aristotle's cosmology and physics were largely abandoned, though his ideas about many other aspects of nature—including material change, zoology, and psychology—were still found useful. In biology, Aristotle's influence continued into the nineteenth century.

During the fourteenth century, Aristotelian natural philosophy was significantly transformed. This transformation played a role in the revolution to come. But it was not because of any particular achievements in science, important though these were. Medieval natural philosophers emphasized ways of knowing and approaching nature—that is, they became interested in what we might characterize as scientific method. They sought to explain how we come to understand nature, even though they rarely pursued the conse-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quences of their own methodological insights.

A few of these methodological changes were relevant to mathematics. The mathematical treatment of the variation of qualities was characteristic of medieval natural philosophy.

The problems were usually imaginary and hypothetical, but the application of mathematics to resolve them was commonplace. In treating such problems, scholastic authors frequently introduced infinites and infinitesimals. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, mathematical ways of thinking, if not mathematics itself, had been incorporated into natural philosophy. The stage was set for the consistent application of natural philosophy to real physical problems, rather than to imaginary variations of qualities.

Most of the methodological contributions to science were, however, philosophical. Scholastic natural philosophers formulated sound interpretations of concepts such as causality, necessity, and contingency. Some—and John Buridan, an eminent arts master at the University of Paris in the fourteenth century, was one of them—concluded that final causes were superfluous and unnecessary. For them, efficient causes were sufficient to determine the agent of a change. John Buridan was also involved in another major methodological development when he insisted that scientific truth is not absolute, like mathematical truth, but has degrees of certitude. The kind of certainty Buridan had in mind consisted of undemonstrable principles that formed the basis of natural science—as, for example, that all fire is warm and that the heaven moves. For Buridan, these principles are not absolute, but are derivable from inductive generalization; or, as he put it, "they are accepted because they have been observed to be true in many instances, and to be false in none."

Moreover, Buridan regarded these inductively generalized principles as conditional because their truth is predicated on the assumption of the "common course of nature." This was a profound assumption that effectively eliminated the effect on science of unpredictable, divine interventions. In short, it eliminated the need to worry about miracles in the pursuit of natural philosophy. Miracles could no longer affect the validity of natural science. Nor indeed could chance occurrences that might occasionally impede or prevent the natural effects of natural causes. Just because individuals are occasionally born with eleven fingers does not negate the fact that in the common course of nature we can confidently expect ten fingers. On this basis Buridan proclaimed that "for us the comprehension of truth with certitude is possible." Using reason, experience, and inductive generalizations, he sought to "save the phenomena" in accordance with the principle of Occam's razor—that is, by the simplest explanation that fits the evidence. Buridan had only made explicit what was implied by his scholastic colleagues. The widespread use of the principle of simplicity was a feature typical of medieval natural philosophy. It was also characteristic of science in the seventeenth century, as when Johannes Kepler declared that "it is the most widely accepted axiom in the natural sciences that Nature makes use of the fewest possible means."

Medieval natural philosophers investigated the "common course of nature," not its uncommon, or miraculous, path. They characterized this approach, admirably, by the phrase "speaking naturally" *(loquendo naturaliter)*—that is, speaking by means of natural science, and not by means of faith or theology. That such an expression should have emerged, and come into common usage in medieval natural philosophy, is a tribute to the scholars who took as their primary mission the explanation of the structure and operation of the world in purely rational and secular terms.

The widespread assumption of "natural impossibilities" or counterfactuals—or, as they are sometimes called, "thought-experiments"—was a significant aspect of medieval methodology. An occurrence would have been considered "naturally impossible" if it was thought inconceivable for it to occur within the accepted framework of Aristotelian physics and cosmology. The frequent use of natural impossibilities derived largely from the powerful medieval concept of God's absolute power, in which it was conceded that God could do anything whatever short of a logical contradiction. In the Middle Ages, such thinking resulted in conclusions that challenged certain aspects of Aristotle's physics. Where Aristotle had shown that other worlds were impossible, medieval scholastics showed not only that the existence of other worlds was possible, but that they would be compatible with our world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The novel replies that emerged from the physics and cosmology of counterfactuals did not cause the overthrow of the Aristotelian worldview, but they did challenge some of its fundamental principles. They made many aware that things could be quite different from what was dreamt of in Aristotle's philosophy. But they accomplished more than that. Not only did some of the problems and solutions continue to influence scholastic authors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but this characteristically medieval approach also influenced significant non-scholastics, who reveal an awareness of the topics debated by scholastics.

One of the most fruitful ideas that passed from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century is the concept of God annihilating matter and leaving behind a vacuum—a concept used effectively by John Locke, Pierre Gassendi, and Thomas Hobbes in their discussions of space.

A famous natural impossibility derived from a proposition condemned in 1277. As a consequence, it was mandatory after 1277 to concede that God could move our spherical world rectilinearly, despite the vacuum that might be left behind. More than an echo of this imaginary manifestation of God's absolute power reverberated through the seventeenth century, when Pierre Gassendi and Samuel Clarke (in his famous dispute with Leibniz) found it useful to appeal to God's movement of the world. In medieval intellectual culture, where observation and experiment played negligible roles, counterfactuals were a powerful tool because they emphasized metaphysics, logic, theology, and the imagination—the very areas in which medieval natural philosophers excelled.

The scientific methodologies described here produced new conceptualizations and assumptions about the world. Ideas about nature's simplicity, its common course, as well as the use of counterfactuals, emphasized new and important ways to think about nature. Galileo and his fellow scientific revolutionaries inherited these attitudes, and most would have subscribed to them.

Another legacy from the Middle Ages to early modern science was an extensive and sophisticated body of terms that formed the basis of later scientific discourse—such terms as *potential, actual, substance, property, accident, cause, analogy, matter, form, essence, genus, species, relation, quantity, quality, place, vacuum, infinite,* and many others. These Aristotelian terms formed a significant component of scholastic natural philosophy. The language of medieval natural philosophy, however, did not consist solely of translated Aristotelian terms. New concepts, terms, and definitions were added in the fourteenth century, most notably in the domains of change and motion. Definitions of uniform motion, uniformly accelerated motion, and instantaneous motion were added to the lexicon of natural philosophy. By the seventeenth century, these terms, concepts, and definitions were embedded in the language and thought of European natural philosophers.

Medieval natural philosophy played another momentous role in the transition to early modern science. It furnished some—if, it is true, not many—of the basic problems that exercised the minds of non-scholastic natural philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Medieval natural philosophers produced hundreds of specific questions about nature, the answers to which included a vast amount of scientific information. Most of the questions had multiple answers, with no genuine way of choosing between them. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, new solutions were proposed by scholars who found Aristotelian answers unacceptable, or, at best, inadequate. The changes they made, however, were mostly in the answers, not in the questions. The scientific revolution was not the result of new questions put to nature in place of medieval questions. It was, at least initially, more a matter of finding new answers to old questions, answers that came, more and more, to include experiments, which were exceptional occurrences in the Middle Ages. Although the solutions differed, many fundamental problems were common to both groups. Beginning around 1200, medieval natural philosophers, largely located at European universities, exhibited an unprecedented concern for the nature and structure of the physical world. The contributors to the scientific revolution continued the same tradition, because by then these matters had become an integral part of intellectual life in Western society.

The Middle Ages did not just transmit a great deal of significantly modified, tradi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tional, natural philosophy, much of it in the form of questions; it also conveyed a remarkable tradition of relatively free, rational inquiry. The medieval philosophical tradition was fashioned in the faculties of arts of medieval universities. Natural philosophy was their domain, and almost from the outset masters of arts struggled to establish as much academic freedom as possible. They sought to preserve and expand the study of philosophy. Arts masters regarded themselves as the guardians of natural philosophy and fought for the right to apply reason to all problems about the physical world. By virtue of their independent status as a faculty, with numerous rights and privileges, they achieved a surprisingly large degree of freedom during the Middle Ages.

Theology was always a potential obstacle, true, but in practice theologians offered little opposition, largely because they, too, were heavily imbued with natural philosophy. By the end of the thirteenth century, the arts faculty had attained virtual independence from the theological faculty. By then, philosophy and its major subdivision, natural philosophy, had emerged as an independent discipline based in the arts faculties of European universities. True, arts masters were always subject to restraints with regard to religious dogma, but the subject areas where such issues arose were limited. During the thirteenth century, arts masters had learned how to cope with the problematic aspects of Aristotle's thought. They treated those problems hypothetically, or announced that they were merely repeating Aristotle's opinions, even as they offered elaborations of his arguments. During the Middle Ages, natural philosophy remained what Aristotle had made it: an essentially secular and rational discipline. It remained so only because the arts faculty struggled to preserve it. In doing so, they transformed natural philosophy into an independent discipline that embraced as well as glorified the rational investigation of all problems relevant to the physical world. In the 1330s, William of Ockham expressed the sentiments of most arts masters and many theologians when he declared:

> Assertions . . . concerning natural philosophy, which do not pertain to theology, should not be solemnly condemned or forbidden to anyone, since in such matters everyone should be free to say freely whatever he pleases.

Everyone who did natural philosophy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the beneficiary of these remarkable developments. The spirit of free inquiry nourished by medieval natural philosophers formed part of the intellectual heritage of all who engaged in scientific investigation. Most, of course, were unaware of their legacy and would probably have denied its existence, preferring to heap ridicule and scorn on Aristotelian scholastics and scholasticism. That ridicule was not without justification. It was time to alter the course of medieval natural philosophy.

Some Aristotelian natural philosophers tried to accommodate the new heliocentric astronomy that had emerged from the brilliant efforts of Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, and Galileo. By then, accommodation was no longer sufficient. Medieval natural philosophy was destined to vanish by the end of the seventeenth century. The medieval scholastic legacy, however, remained—namely, the spirit of free inquiry, the emphasis on reason, a variety of approaches to nature, and the core of legitimate problems that would occupy the attention of the new science. Inherited from the Middle Ages, too, was the profound sense that all of these activities were legitimate and important, that discovering the way the world operated was a laudable undertaking. These enormous achievements were accomplished in the late Middle Ages, between 1175 and 1500.

To illustrate how medieval contributions to the new science ought to be viewed, let me draw upon an analogy from the Middle Ages. In the late thirteenth century in Italy, the course of the history of medicine was altered significantly when human dissection was allowed for postmortems and was shortly afterward introduced into medical schools, where it soon became institutionalized as part of the anatomical training of medical students. Except in ancient Egypt, human dissection had been forbidden in the ancient world. By the second century A.D., it was also banned in Egypt. It was never permitted in the Islamic world. Its introduction into the Latin West marked a new beginning, made without serious objection from the Church. It was a momentous event. Dissection of cadavers was used primarily in teaching, albeit irregularly until the end of the fifteenth century. Rarely, if at all, was it employed to enhance scientific

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

knowledge of the human body. The revival of human dissection and its incorporation into medical training throughout the Middle Ages laid a foundation for what was to come.

Without it, we cannot imagine the significant anatomical progress that was made by such keen anatomists as Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Bartolommeo Eustachio (1520–74), Andreas Vesalius (1514–64), and many others.

What human dissection did for medicine, the translations, the universities, the theologian-natural philosophers, and the medieval version of Aristotelian natural philosophy did collectively for the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. These vital features of medieval science formed a foundation that made possible a continuous, uninterrupted eight hundred years of scientific development, a development that began in Western Europe and spread around the world.

I've Cultivated a Nostalgia

SCOTT COFFEL

I've cultivated a nostalgia so frugal it re-lives
the death of communism without party favors or vodka, your
embryo taking root

and Ceausescu executed within hours
of each other on a Christmas morning
five years down the road from this consensual foot massage

in the balcony of the recital hall,
our pleasure advancing without resistance, our souls
privy to a sense of scale that makes a flea circus out of history.

✪ SCOTT COFFEL's poems have appeared in the *Antioch Review*, the *Paris Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *MSS*, and the *Wallace Stevens Journal*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Remembering Odessa

JUDITH HARRIS

Father knew six languages
and sold sewing machines in Odessa.
Before I was a schoolgirl,
I could read in three.
I remember the yellow hair
of my mother, that matched
the wands of wheat in picture books.

They buried her
among a few twisted shrags in the onions
where they had pulled up roots
and dug and dug;

poor mother was too big
for the box, so they had to bend
her knees to fit her in.
The fields were ice, and among the mills,
Polish women were picking mushrooms
off the truck in aproned coats
and blue babushkas.

Men covered my mother
in snow—letting it crack against
the pine lid in all sorts

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of lovely, unpredictable ways,
like a foreign alphabet.

I am so old now
my mother seems like my own child.
I can lift her easily
as the Yiddish sky
boosting the birds and almond trees.

Thinking back, I'm glad
they dressed her in warm boots
borrowed from a sister.
White flakes will be falling
where she is traveling at last,
or else, it could be bare.

✪ JUDITH HARRIS is an Assistant Professor of English at George Washington University. Her work has appeared in the the *Antioch Review*, *Tikkun*, and *Storming Heaven's Gate: Women's Spiritual Journeys*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Jilted Clairvoyant

NEAL BOWERS

If, when you look at your hand,
the first thing you think of is "wave,"
you are destined to say good-bye
to everything you love,
hello to the horizon.

If you think "grip" or "hold,"
your hand will turn a wheel
to steer you somewhere else.

Think "fist" and you will fight
to leave; "caress," and your departure
will be tender.

Nothing suits a finger better
than a map, so many roads to trace,
towns to point to,
and the thumb lifts easy
as a blossom by the highway,
the hand articulate in any language.

Feel how your knuckles curve
to fit the suitcase handle,
the doorknob, the railing at the terminal,
your hands hanging still by your side,
waiting to catch onto anything,
to be gone.

✪ NEAL BOWERS, Professor of English at Iowa State University, is the author of *Words for the Taking: The Hunt for a Plagiarist.* He is also the author of *Night Vision*, a book of poems, and his poetry has appeared in many journals, including *Poetry*, the *Hudson Review*, and the *Sewanee Review.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Road to Timbuktu

Why I Travel

WILLIAM ZINSSER

The exotic travel bug that I caught as a G.I. in North Africa during World War II has never passed out of my system. I still feel its familiar tug and find myself getting out maps and applying for visas to faraway countries. Most recently the tug was to Laos. I've been clipping articles about Laos forever, picturing myself in the old royal capital of Luang Prabang, and earlier this year my wife put me out of my misery and said, "Let's go." Whatever journey I might think up, she has never regarded it as unthinkable, starting in 1954, when I persuaded her to get married and take a wedding trip across the heart of Africa, where few honeymooners had gone before.

"Why Laos?" friends asked, hearing about our latest trip. It was the same old question—"Why Burma?" "Why Yemen?" "Why Timbuktu?"—and I could only tell them it was the same old urge. But what *was* that urge? What impulse had driven me to seek out all those remote places? I've often asked myself that question, looking back in astonishment at bold decisions made with perfect confidence and risks routinely taken. Nothing in my early life suggested such a bent. I had a sheltered boyhood and was a cautious boy.

Norman Lewis, the great English travel writer, completing a memoir of his own at the age of eighty-seven, told me he had just realized he must have been born with a gene for adventurousness; otherwise he wouldn't have done so many things that struck him as normal conduct when he was young that now seem to have been unnecessarily foolish. I didn't get Lewis's gene: his indifference to comfort and safety and planning. I don't want to camp out in the mountains of New Guinea or the jungles of Brazil. I always want to know where I'll be spending the night, and I want it to be in a decent hotel with plumbing that works. In all my travels, I've only slept outside once, rolled up in a blanket on the Sahara. I'm not that kind of born traveler.

Nor am I the kind of traveler who wants to see everything there is to see. There are vast portions of the world I have absolutely no interest in seeing. Just the thought of visiting Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland brings me close to narcolepsy, and my apathy extends in a broad swath across Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany, Poland, Central Europe, Russia, and all former Soviet states. I'd like to be parachuted into some of their cities to look at the architecture and the art: Cracow, Prague, Budapest, St. Petersburg. But then I'd like to be airlifted back out. No steppes or black forests, please. No peasant blouses.

Cold weather is obviously a factor here. Not only do I hate to be cold; I like to watch people going about their lives, and in the northern countries they stay indoors, keeping warm and keeping their homes famously tidy. My travel bug activates itself at the warm latitudes—at sunbaked Mediterranean ports where life spills untidily into the streets—and it follows the rising thermometer south through Africa and east to Egypt and the Levant and Arabia and India and Asia.

So what gene *did* I get? Plain curiosity must be somewhere in my DNA. I want to know what it feels like to actually be in a place that I've always heard about, to be part of its daily atmosphere and rhythm. I don't need to see every famous sight, every last mosque and museum; art is all around me, wherever I look—

✪ WILLIAM ZINSSER, author of *On Writing Well*, has just completed a travel memoir.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intricately woven baskets in an Asian market, elegant pottery in an African village, ornate silver jewelry on tribal women. I marvel at how broadly the artistic gene has been distributed: at the human ability to make ordinary objects of extraordinary beauty. I marvel at the beauty of the people themselves, especially women and children. I marvel at the infinite varieties of religious experience: the countless forms that faith can take, the endless thanking and beseeching and propitiating of gods through worship and song and dance. These are some of the common miracles I go in search of.

That still doesn't explain why I've been so drawn to the exotic. On a simple level the answer begins with language. Many of my destinations first came calling with their sound: Mombasa, Tahiti, Samoa, Rangoon, Bali, Macassar, Timbuktu. The name was reason enough to go. Often they also carried some strong association with the popular culture of my boyhood—the books and movies I grew up on. The Africa I wanted to cross with my bride was first put into my head by H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines.* My Arabia was first shaped by chivalrous biographies of T. E. Lawrence, my Bangkok by *Anna and the King of Siam,* my India by *Gunga Din,* my Khartoum by *Four Feathers,* my South Seas by *Mutiny on the Bounty.* Most of it was romantic junk—a fantasy grafted by white writers onto the darker societies—and I swallowed it whole as historical truth. I was a product of my guileless times. World War II would put an end to that credulous era for me and for the seven million other American boys it sent overseas to discover what the world was really like.

On a deeper level, I suspect that my yen has some roots in my lifelong effort to wriggle out of the privileged WASP world I was born into. I snipped the umbilical cord by leaving Princeton to enlist in the army. I had no ambition to be an officer, and the army humored me in that democratic whim. Waking up one morning in North Africa was the wake-up call of my life. I was intoxicated by the otherness of the Arab world. Nobody from my world had ever traveled there or even mentioned the Arabs. Our world ended with England and Europe, Greece and Rome; everything else was terra incognita.

I don't mean that I came home from the war and renounced Western civilization; London and Paris and Rome are on my short list of favorite cities. But Fez is also on that list—the "other" still exerts its pull; it was Luang Prabang that called me in 1996, not the Loire or the Lake District. That gene is one that I have no trouble identifying. The central perversity of my life is that I've never wanted to be doing what everyone else was doing. Something in me wants to take the road to Timbuktu—the road I wasn't expected to take. Something in me enjoys being the first person I know to visit Laos.

Of all my departures from an expected path, the pivotal one was my decision not to go into the family shellac business, William Zinsser & Co., though it had been on the same Manhattan block for more than a century and I was the fourth William Zinsser and only son, but to become a newspaperman. That decision enabled me to be a traveler. Most of my seemingly capricious jaunts were grounded in my vocation as a journalist. I've used writing to give myself an interesting life and a continuing education. I've persuaded editors to send me to places I wanted to see, or I've sent myself on stories I wanted to write that I thought editors would want to buy.

Often those stories grew out of some special interest or affection of mine. It was my love of music, not my love of travel, that took me to Shanghai and Venice for the two articles I'm most glad to have written—on the jazzmen Dwike Mitchell and Willie Ruff—and also took me to Brazil. I was sent there by a magazine to look for the roots of American jazz in Bahia, the Brazilian province largely populated by descendants of slaves brought from West Africa to work the Portuguese sugar plantations. What qualified me to go looking for those roots was that I knew jazz and had traveled in Africa, where the beat was born.

I therefore also travel to write: to bring back the news and to validate my experience. (Writers tend to think that no story has really happened until they write about it.) The act of writing organizes how I spend my time when I arrive in a place. It gives me information, concentrates my thoughts, and opens doors I wouldn't otherwise be allowed to knock on.

If I hadn't interviewed the governor of Fiji, Sir Ronald Garvey, I wouldn't have been invited to a formal dinner at the governor's mansion and played the cork game. Sir Ronald had invented the game to while away the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

long island nights. After dinner we were all deployed around a large table, and each of us was given a string with a cork attached to it. Lady Garvey brought several bath towels and piled them in the middle of the table to form a thick padded surface. Someone else arrived with the lid of an enormous silver soup tureen. Lady Garvey gave the lid to a brigadier, whose tunic gleamed with medals, and told him to grasp it firmly. The aide-de-camp, she said, was going to turn over a pack of cards. Every time a jack came up, we were to pull our string. Meanwhile the brigadier would slam down the silver lid and try to trap as many corks as he could.

Flip, flip, flip, flip went the cards. Ooooooooh went the players when the jack came up. BOOOOOM! went the silver lid when it crashed down onto the towels, the table quivering under the blow. "Who got caught?" Lady Garvey asked, lifting the lid to find three corks nestled there, the others having flown away. She marked the three victims on her scoring pad and the game went on. And on and on. Flip, flip, flip, flip. Ooooooooh. BOOOOOM! The faces around the table became a blur of British smiles and teeth. We were doomed to play the cork game forever. That long-ago evening still reverberates in my eardrums when I think of the ebbing power of the British Empire during my lifetime as a traveler. No other event could have given me such a vivid picture of Great Britain's outmoded colonial class trying to keep itself amused in the tropics. It wasn't just a dinner party; I was in on the end of a long historical process.

That, on the deepest level, is why I travel: to make a connection with what has gone before. I'm after the emotional moment. Most people, if asked to name the most emotional moment of their life, might recall some personal or family event: a birth, a wedding, a death. My three most emotional moments took place far from home. One was the day World War II ended. I happened to be visiting Siena with three other G.I.s, and we were the only American soldiers in town. When church bells began to toll the news, the townspeople hurried down to the great square where the Sienese have celebrated every important event since the Middle Ages. Noticing us in the crowd, they carried us around the square and through the streets.

My second most emotional moment took place at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where two black American musicians, the pianist Dwike Mitchell and the French-horn player Willie Ruff, were introducing live jazz to China. Ruff, who had taught himself Chinese, was explaining improvisation to three hundred music students and professors who didn't know what improvisation was and couldn't imagine that it was possible. The Chinese don't even have a word for *improvisation* of this kind. As Mitchell demonstrated, giving a series of elegant new lives to a short piano piece by one of the Chinese students, the room erupted in wonder and disbelief.

Ruff also provided my third moment—the richest one of all—when he went to Venice to play Gregorian chants on his French horn in St. Mark's cathedral, at night, to test its amazing acoustics, which greatly influenced the Venetian school of music. For two hours, he and I and a sacristan were the only people in the cavernous church as darkness slowly fell over its interior and Ruff was left playing by the light of a single candle.

On all three occasions I was connected to immense historical, social, and cultural currents. In Siena I was connected to everyone in that jubilant city and to everyone else who had waited since 1939 for the end of World War II or had died to make it possible. In Shanghai I was connected to the ancient power of music to bridge the widest kind of cultural gulf: West and East, African and Asian, oral and written. In Venice I was connected to chants that had been played and sung in the liturgy of St. Mark's since it opened in 1067.

Dozens of other moments that were almost as resonant come back to me. Watching a camel caravan materialize out of the desert carrying salt to Timbuktu, I was connected to all the caravans that ever crossed the Sahara. Watching the French explorer Eric de Bisschop sail away from Tahiti on a small bamboo raft bound for Chile, I was connected to all the sailors since the earliest Polynesians who have set out across the Pacific. Climbing to Robert Louis Stevenson's grave on a mountaintop in Samoa, watching an old Balinese drummer teach a temple dance to a five-year-old girl by placing her feet on his feet, meeting a Vietnamese poet in Hanoi who showed me a poem of healing reconciliation that he had written and left at the Vietnam Memorial in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Washington, I was moved by mystical bonds and continuities that I could only have felt by leaving home and putting myself in their path. Such moments have caught me by surprise with their beauty and their grace and have stayed with me ever since.

Rondeau

Old Woman with Cat

MARILYN TAYLOR

Osteoporosis (one of life's indignities)
is such a splendid name for the disease—
all those little o's, holes in the bone
where the rain gets in, rendering a crone
like me defective, porous, as Swiss cheese.

I'm riddled at the hips and knees,
roundsided as parentheses
since my shrunken spine has known
    osteoporosis

and my extremities
have shriveled into lacy filigrees,
breakable as glass on stone.
Naked at the window ledge I drone
to my sleek, supple Siamese:
    osteoporosis.

✪ MARILYN TAYLOR's work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Southern California Anthology*, and *Poetry Northwest*, among other journals. Her most recent book of poems is *Shadows Like These* (Wm Caxton Ltd., Ellison Bay, Wisconsin).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Parents vs. State

WILLIAM PETERSEN

In the *Times Literary Supplement*, John Tyler Bonner, a biology professor at Princeton, described the fundamental changes he had lived through in his long professional career. In the early decades of this century, evolutionary biologists took over the model that Charles Darwin had bequeathed to them, and subsequently the field of population genetics continued with the same object of analysis, species in the mass. Many of the dramatic breakthroughs, however, came from research concentrated on the single individual or even the single gene.

Similarly, one can say that Robert Malthus gave demographers, who were organizing their discipline during the same several decades, the framework of their analyses. So long as their principal emphasis was on mortality, broad-scale statistical studies worked very well, for motivation could be largely ignored. Shifting the same type of calculation to fertility, however, incurred problems, which became apparent only after a considerable time and which have not yet been resolved. For the past century there has been a war between prospective parents and state bureaucracies over who shall decide on the size of families. First in Europe, then in the Third World, fierce battles have been fought, and the state won rather few of them.

Like all other species, humans are profligate in the supply of their reproductive matter. Males produce millions of spermatazoa, only one of which can fertilize each receptive egg. At the start of her fecund years, each female has some 200,000 to 400,000 oocytes, as immature ova are called. Most of these potential eggs, however, decompose at an early stage, and during her reproductive life perhaps as few as 400 will be ovulated, and of the fertilized ova perhaps only one in five will implant itself in the wall of the uterus, the first step to the formation of a fetus. The number of potential offspring from a single mother, thus, provides a very wide margin for the frequent mishaps.

Given this physiological framework, what is the maximum number of children that a population can produce? The largest recorded families have been in an Anabaptist sect called Hutterites, after their sixteenth-century founder, Jakob Hutter. From their original home in Moravia, they moved to Russia and then, in the late nineteenth century, to South Dakota, with eventual daughter colonies elsewhere in the United States and Canada. With an average of more than ten children in every completed family, Hutterites have been taken as the measure of "man's capacity to reproduce," the title of a pioneering work on their reproductive system. Though conversions have been few (fewer even than the tiny number of defections), their population in the United States rose from 443 persons in 1880 to more than fifty times that number in a bit more than a century.

Ansley Coale, an economics professor at Princeton, devised an elegant measure of family size based on this anomalous population. If a woman marries at age fifteen and, throughout her fecund period, has the same number of children that Hutterites do in each age in-

✪ WILLIAM PETERSEN, retired Professor of Demography from Ohio State University and the author of *Malthus* and, with Renee Petersen, a five-volume *Dictionary of Demography*. His most recent work, *Ethnicity Counts*, will be published in early 1997.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terval, she will bear an average of 12.6 children during her lifetime. If we take this to be a population's maximum potential (individual families have, of course, been larger), the reproduction of less prolific peoples can be related to this base by what Coale termed the index of overall fertility.

What is it, then, that cuts down the actual family size below this potential in virtually all societies? Everywhere the typical age at marriage fluctuates about a figure set by more or less stable cultural imperatives. In what the British statistician John Hajnal called the "European pattern" of family formation, its distinctive features have been an advanced age at marriage and a large proportion of adults who remain single. With the poor quality of relevant statistical data, etymology provides the best evidence of how early this pattern evolved. The word *husband* derives from two words meaning *house* and *dwell,* and its original meaning (still visible in *husbandman* and *husbandry*) was a man who owned a home. In Middle English (roughly, 1150 to 1400), the word for an unmarried man was *anilepiman.* These two terms, one referring to the management of property and the other to marital status, gradually became associated as opposites, with *anilepiman* coming to mean a man who had no living and therefore could not marry, and *husband,* a man who was able to care for a family and therefore could get (or, eventually, was) married.

Seemingly, the standard that a marriage should be founded on the ability to care for the resultant family is contradicted by the usual inverse relation between social class and fertility: in the modern West those better able materially to care for children have generally had fewer of them. To understand this relation, one must place it in the context of upward mobility. One of the best studies of the matter is a book titled *Prosperity and Parenthood* (1954) by the English sociologist J. A. Banks. During the nineteenth century, when Britain became the world's wealthiest nation, it was possible for many to climb into high social strata. To succeed, aspirants had to set and maintain an appropriate style of life, with a minimum of one full-time servant, a carriage, and an annual holiday away from home. Outlays for children, especially the cost of the socially requisite boarding school, rose steadily, and reducing family expenditures was accomplished mainly by postponing the formation of families. Among the clergymen, doctors, lawyers, aristocrats, merchants, bankers, manufacturers, and other Englishmen of the gentleman class who married between 1840 and 1870, the average age was a shade under thirty years. Not only in Britain but also in other Western countries, the decline in fertility began in the rising middle class and from there gradually spread to the rest of society.

Banks's study suggests that reproduction must be perceived not merely as "natural," with all that that word connotes, but also in a rational perspective, legitimately subject to human control. The social structure should preferably be open; in the words of Norman Himes, in his classic history of the birth-control movement, "The widespread desire for self-advancement economically, which is such an outstanding characteristic of capitalist civilization, is fundamental." The crucial element is aspiration: as affluence rises, the desire for a still finer style of living also increases. When middle-class parents say they cannot afford another child while those with much lower incomes can and do, the difference does not derive from the cost of comforts or even of subsistence.

One or two generations ago demographers often hypothesized that until modern birth control started in the first decades of the nineteenth century, there was no conscious regulation of fertility. That is not a proposition, however, that can withstand the slightest examination of the evidence. In his early survey of tribal societies, the English social scientist Alexander Carr-Saunders concluded that without exception these cultures restrict the increase of population by such customs as abstention from marriage, delayed marriage, periodic abstinence from intercourse, coitus interruptus, prolonged lactation, contraception of various types, abortion, and infanticide. Whatever fault one may find with Carr-Saunders's generalization, it is certainly more valid than its contrary—that tribal societies have ordinarily accommodated to Darwin's model of non-human reproduction.

Or, as another example, consider the "familial society"—as it is often termed in Western texts—of classical China. It is true that the ideal was a large family to guarantee continuity in the male line. But if peasants had many

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

children, most of them died in infancy; and the gentry had to consider the consequence, given the absence of primogeniture, of a repeated division of family-owned land. Perhaps the best historical account of the Chinese upper class was by the American Sinologist Chung-li Chang, and he estimated that the gentry family averaged just under three children. Marital coitus was regarded as unlucky or dangerous on the first, seventh, fifteenth, twenty-first, twenty-eighth, and twenty-ninth days of each lunar month; on the sixteenth day of the fifth month; when there is an earthquake, rain, thunder and lightning, great heat, or great cold; after washing the hair, a long trip, heavy drinking or eating; when the man is tired, very excited, too old; during the woman's menstruation, for one month following the birth of a child, and after the woman has reached age forty; during twenty-seven months following the death of a parent; permanently after the birth of a grandchild. Books and astrological calendars denoting auspicious and inauspicious days still circulate in Taiwan (and possibly also in mainland China). If all the rules are observed, intercourse is permitted on only about a hundred days per year in order to achieve the family's prime goal, to bring forth healthy and lucky sons.

The small library about the English pioneers of neo-Malthusianism is almost entirely laudatory, yet their direct effect was probably not as great as is often supposed. Most of the noisy advocates of birth control were all-round dissidents. Charles Bradlaugh was a notorious atheist, a lonely voice in a religious age. Annie Besant, his co-defendant in the two famous trials for distributing a pamphlet on contraception, also began as an atheist and then advocated the hardly more popular causes of theosophy and Indian nationalism. The respectable barristers and businessmen who were actually producing fewer children would not have been attracted to their writings. Yet the neo-Malthusian movement, which indeed took off from the Bradlaugh-Besant trials, did affect our ideas about birth limitation—in particular, by its enormous emphasis on contraception as contrasted with family responsibility.

The English neo-Malthusian leagues were influential also when their ideas spread to other Western countries. In the United States, Frederick Hollick's *The Marriage Guide*, first published in 1850, went through more than three hundred printings, with a total sale of almost a million copies. The methods of contraception he described included a rhythm method (based on a false timing of ovulation), intercourse without ejaculation, condoms, "womb veils" (that is, diaphragms), a sponge, douche, and abortion. Also recommended were such chemicals and extracts as ergot, cotton root, aloes, savin (a type of juniper berry), tansy, opium, iodine, lemon juice, vinegar, prussic or sulfuric acid, and Lysol. Only quacks prescribed the more startling items in this list, but in even the best medical circles knowledge of the physiology of reproduction was slight and often faulty.

Fertility in France probably began to fall before the 1789 revolution, and by 1800 it was an estimated tenth below the earlier traditional level. Around 1850, when British, Swedish, and Danish rates were close to 0.7 of the Hutterite maximum, the French index was around 0.5 and declining rather fast. Even less than in Britain could one ascribe the fall in France's birth rate to a neo-Malthusian movement. Paul Robin, founder of the very early League for the Regeneration of Humanity, was a genuine revolutionary, a one-time friend of Karl Marx. Eugène and Jeanne Humbert, who put out a series of birth-control magazines in the 1930s and 1940s, appealed mainly to anarchists. However, the two main parties of the Left, the Socialists and the Communists, were either indifferent or hostile to antinatalist propaganda, and in the middle classes the movement had virtually no support.

The French state was the first in modern times to intervene in an attempt to raise the country's fertility, not merely with pro-natalist broadsides but with various positive and negative inducements. Family allowances were given successively to mailmen and telegraph operators (1900), the army (1913), civil servants (1916), and private employees with dependents (1932). Laws forbidding abortion and the dissemination of contraceptives culminated in a broad family code, enacted in mid-1939 and put into effect under the Nazi occupation. It increased family subsidies and provided for other types of family assistance, strengthened the prohibition of abortion, introduced measures designed to reduce infant and maternal mortality, and prescribed educa-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion on population matters. In 1945, within a few months of the end of World War II, the French government established the National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED) and charged it with providing an accurate factual base for a continuing population policy.

Similar programs were adopted in most European countries, both democratic and totalitarian. Fascist Italy set a full range, from the discouragement of celibacy and the subsidizing of marriage to special awards for large families and the inhibition of emigration. Two Swedish socialists, Gunnar and Alva Myrdal, together wrote a work in Swedish that stimulated a lively discussion culminating in the enactment of extensive pro-natalist measures. When the same arguments were presented in English in Alva Myrdal's *Nation and Family* (1940), it became probably the most influential pro-natalist tract of the period.

In the United States, the decline in family size during the depression of the 1930s stimulated many intellectuals to sound an alarm. In a famous presidential address to the American Economic Association, Alvin Hansen spelled out the dire consequences of zero population growth. Louis Dublin, chief demographer of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, traveled to one women's club after another, personally imploring the members to have more children. The state itself, however, did not intervene with pro-natalist measures. American tax laws have penalized the married state, and the deductions from taxable income for dependent children are, by European standards, ridiculously small.

Perhaps the most important work of David Glass, who until his death was the dean of British demographers, was *Population Policy and Movements in Europe* (1967). Glass's critical review of the pro-natalist measures instituted in several West European countries concluded that, with the possible exception of the rigorous ban on abortion in Nazi Germany, they had all been failures. It had proved to be wellnigh impossible to build a bridge between potential parents' decisions whether to have children and the need that the nations perceived for more citizens or subjects.

One reason was that in a democracy prohibitions were difficult to enforce. In France, nominally illegal abortions were long readily available, at least in the major cities, probably also in most of the countryside. For a time, when it was forbidden to sell condoms to be used as contraceptives, the same devices could be bought everywhere as prophylactics. The inhibition of birth controls of any kind was fully enforceable only in a totalitarian framework, and even the degree of regimentation instituted in Fascist Italy did not suffice.

Nor was the attempt to bribe potential parents generally any more successful. The American demographer Thomas Espenshade wrote a number of interesting studies on the cost of children. In 1960–61 the money spent to raise three American children from birth to their eighteenth birthdays amounted to 59.1 percent of a lower-class family's income, 47.4 percent in the middle stratum, and 38.8 percent in the upper class. From 1977 to 1980 the cost rose by a third, to a possible maximum of $85,000 per child. Whatever the comparable figures have been in other countries, in none of them did the state attempt to subsidize the full cost of child rearing. So far from stimulating fertility, an official emphasis on monetary outlays may well have helped undermine the traditional underpinning of large families, which functioned—when it did—with little regard to cost.

As economists use the word *cost*, it includes what is called opportunity costs, or the value of alternatives that have to be foregone in order to make a particular purchase or follow a chosen course of action. Thus, one of the main costs of having a child may be that, at least for a period, the woman stops working outside the home or that she fails to seek a job or even to train adequately for one. Though such factors cannot be measured precisely, potential parents who calculate their choices certainly weigh both the direct and the opportunity costs of each child.

During the past several decades, the main emphasis of the campaign for zero population growth has shifted to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Remarkably, population policy in these places, in spite of the wide divergence in all the key variables, has been quite similar. The reason is that typically the programs did not evolve separately within each national context but were introduced, sponsored, and largely financed by Western or international institutions, which set a more or less unitary perspective on the problem and the means by which it could be solved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the countries that were gaining their independence after World War II, intellectuals were often opposed, at least initially, to any effort to cut the rate of population growth. Nationalist, Marxist, and Catholic spokesmen, whatever their differences on other issues, were all generally hostile to birth-control programs. Nehru (who as late as 1948 called India "underpopulated"), Nasser, and their counterparts came to power convinced that when economic difficulties had been blamed on large families, this charge was simply an excuse for imperialists' maladministration. "There is strength in numbers," according to a statement summarizing Mexican views; "to oppose population is to oppose civilization," in the words of the influential editor of San Salvador's *El Diario de Hoy*. In short, anti-natalist programs in the Third World have been infused not only with bureaucratic sloth and corruption but also with sometimes persistent doubts about their necessity or urgency.

True, whatever the flaws in such projects, most of them have been declared a success—as judged, however, not by a decline in fertility but rather by the proportion of eligible couples that were "reached" or the number of "acceptors" of the contraceptive devices. In the view of these missionaries of our secular age, villagers who resist their blandishments are ignorant and prejudiced, while those who willingly swallow them are bathed in approval. In India, in the most significant independent replication of a major project, one of the earlier acceptors commented on his experience:

> [The program's field workers] were so nice, you know. And they came from distant lands to be with us. All they wanted was that we accept the [foam] tablets. I lost nothing and probably received their prayers. And they, they must have gotten some promotion.

One of the acceptors used the boxes, still containing the foam tablets, to build a little temple with which he decorated his living quarters.

Those who actually used the contraceptives they were given did not necessarily contribute to a reduction in fertility. Some merely shifted to the means furnished by Western taxpayers; others soon lapsed into recurrent childbearing. In the best case, those that the programs succeeded in reaching were never typical of the target population; they were the cream skimmed off the top, those most receptive to anti-natalist propaganda.

In the physical sciences an evaluation is typically based on a comparison of an experimental with a control sector, but such a procedure has seldom been used to evaluate anti-natalist programs. In the million-dollar Khanna study, exceptionally, the six Indian villages where the family-planning drive was concentrated were contrasted with six others. There was an overall temporary decline in the birth rate; but it began before the program got under way, for a certain period continued at the same rate among both the test and the control populations, and was owing to a rise in the age at marriage rather than the increased use of contraceptives.

The disappointing results with contraceptives that need a constant renewal induced Indian administrators to move toward sterilization as the favored method of contraception. According to Karan Singh, minister for health and family planning in the 1970s, India might have to "think the unthinkable"—to impose a limit on family size through what was termed "compulsuasion," an amalgam of COMPULsion and perSUASION. Civil servants were denied raises or transfers or sometimes even salaries until they had convinced a specified number of potential fathers to undergo sterilization. Officials withheld the licenses from hotels, theaters, banks, airlines, and other businesses until the firms induced their employees with three or more children to have the operation. Opposition was exacerbated by charges (quite valid, according to Ved Mehta's *The New India*, 1978) that the Hindu majority was using the program to reduce the proportion of untouchables and particularly of Muslims. Police and family planners were killed; several dozen protesters in anti-sterilization riots were shot and one hundred fifty wounded. Antagonism to sterilization was a significant factor in the fall of Indira Gandhi in 1977, and for a period under the succeeding government, state-sponsored family planning was assiduously underplayed.

The most notorious example of compulsuasion has been, of course, China. After the census of 1953 recorded an unexpectedly huge 583 million (the current estimate is 1.2 billion), the country's constitution was revised

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to include a new canon: "The State advocates and encourages birth control." Laws raised the minimum ages at marriage, and any who married earlier were to be forcibly separated. Urban couples who pledge to hold their family size to a single offspring can apply for a "one-child certificate," which entitles them to a monthly stipend until the child reaches fourteen years, preferential treatment in his or her schooling, and for themselves in housing, jobs, and pensions. The principal means of reducing the rate of population growth has been a more or less voluntary, more or less forced abortion. Steven Mosher, a young American then living in China, wrote the first extensive report on this campaign in his *Broken Earth: The Rural Chinese* (1983). (When the Communist government complained to Stanford University about his detailed account of forced abortions, his doctoral committee ousted him from its program.) Subsequently Mosher wrote another book on the subject, *A Mother's Ordeal: One Woman's Fight Against China's One-Child Policy* (1991), based on a narrative by a reformed one-time abortionist. Remarkably, with all of the discussion about how the United States should balance international trade against China's persecution of dissidents, the more widespread persecution of prospective parents is almost never mentioned.

The one-child policy has cut the average Chinese family, according to the usual account, from six to somewhat more than two children. How realistic are these figures?

The same pressures that have induced production cadres to exaggerate, falsify, and fabricate their reports on industry or agriculture are evident also in pronouncements on family size. Details in abundance are given by John Aird, the best of the American demographers who have concentrated on China, in his various papers, now summed up in *Slaughter of the Innocents: Coercive Birth Control in China* (1990). But even if we assume that all figures are somewhat cooked and that in any case the cooking was with ingredients not too precise to start with, there is no doubt that in record time China's forceful measures have effected a very significant decline in population growth. Like the pro-natalist policy of Nazi Germany, the successful anti-natalism suggests that totalitarian controls may be needed to bring about, independently of the individual couples' desires, either a rise or a fall in average family size.

The rationale behind state-sponsored family policy over the past century or so can be summarized in a few bald statements. There is a crisis, which demands official intervention by the state. The principal means of achieving the goal is to deny (or furnish) potential parents the contraceptives they might use.

There is a crisis. A diagnosis of "underpopulation" or "overpopulation" implies that there is a norm toward which policy is directed. The first formal specification of an optimum population came as late as 1928, when the English economist Edwin Cannan defined it as the number of inhabitants of a country that results in the highest per capita economic return. From this pioneer effort there ensued not a consensus but a continuous scramble to redefine the concept. Successive economists proposed criteria that became more and more esoteric, ranging from the population that results in the largest total production per head to the point at which the marginal and average product per laborer are equal. As still more complications were added on, a reaction resulted in utter simplification: the optimum is "the number socially desirable." However, even the notion that there is one optimum population is dubious, for the number of persons able to produce the maximum income per capita, for instance, is usually considerably smaller than that best able to carry out the equally legitimate national purpose of defending the country.

In the early 1970s, when the American Association for the Advancement of Science posed the question "Is there an optimum size of population?" to thirty-one presumably knowledgeable persons, thirteen responded yes, seven responded no, and eleven had no answer. Still today, this is an accurate reflection of the state of the concept. In short, those involved in implementing population policies have been seeking the better without being able to define the good.

Nevertheless there is a crisis. Even if we cannot stipulate precisely the best population, according to the policymakers' thesis, the disparity between the ever growing number of people and the ever smaller resources on which they depend obviously demands some government action. Those who are inclined to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

accept on faith such cries of woe should read the American economist Julian Simon. A recent book, *Population Matters* (1990), gives solid evidence for his argument, which he sums up as follows:

> Raw materials and energy are getting less scarce. The world's food supply is improving. Pollution in the United States has been decreasing. Population growth has long-term benefits, though added people are a burden in the short run.

Pro-natalist measures in Europe, based ostensibly on reasonably accurate data, actually were derived from population extrapolations. Some projections proved to be more or less accurate for a period; but the virtually universal prediction in the 1930s that the size of Western families would remain small or, more probably, continue to decline was blown to smithereens by the baby boom. And the long anticipated "echo" of the baby boom, which was supposed to arrive when the many babies became an equally large number of parents, never showed up. In works on less developed countries, similar projections are made with a typical lack of reliable data. Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute called the figures "guesses dignified with decimal points" as concocted by ideologues masking as scientists.

What is to be done? The question has been put to every critic of population policy in less developed countries. The crucial factor in fertility, the Australian demographer John Caldwell believes, is whether on balance wealth flows up from children to parents or down from parents to children. In the Third World, children typically cost little, for they start working at a very early age and are expected to care for their elderly parents. Under capitalist production, on the contrary, wealth generally flows in the opposite direction, with an inevitable tendency to reduce family size. One important factor in facilitating such a transition is mass education, for educated children cost their parents much more and generally contribute far less.

To the degree that Caldwell is correct, furnishing the world's peasants with contraceptives can do no more than perhaps quicken a transition under way. If wealth flows from children to parents, no control of births will be used unless, as in China, it is forced on the parents. And once wealth has started to move from parents to children, the parents will find a way to cut back on their expenses. That Caldwell's thesis sounds new is an indication of how ahistorical the attempted intervention in family formation has been, for almost two centuries ago Malthus expounded essentially the same view.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Voyage to Greeneland

THE LIFE OF GRAHAM GREENE. *By Norman Sherry.* Volume 1: 1904–1939. *Penguin. Paper, $18.95.* Volume 2: 1939–1955. *Viking. $34.95.*

GRAHAM GREENE: THE ENEMY WITHIN. *By Michael Shelden. Random House. $27.50.*

GRAHAM GREENE: THREE LIVES. *By Anthony Mockler. Hunter MacCay. £14.95.*

GRAHAM GREENE: FRIEND AND BROTHER. *By Leopoldo Duráno. HarperCollins. $24.*

ANN M. BEGLEY

Graham Greene, one of the most accomplished English novelists of the twentieth century, whose vast oeuvre has been translated into forty languages, died in 1991 at the age of eighty-six, and already the presses are turning out conflicting accounts of who and what he was. All are in accord, nonetheless, that the author's life cannot be truly fathomed without first decoding his writings. Reticent yet prone to practical jokes, elusive and exceedingly complex, there are few more difficult subjects than (Henry) Graham Greene, who appointed Norman Sherry, the Joseph Conrad scholar, to be his authorized biographer—with the understanding that he would employ the same methods of literary sleuthing that he had used to penetrate the mystery of Conrad's character: to follow in his subject's footsteps wherever they might lead, to meet and interview the people he had met. In keeping with this agreement, Sherry has become Greene's doppelgänger, journeying all over the world the past twenty years to difficult and dangerous places, a kind of bloodhound in pursuit of his quarry. The first volume of a projected trilogy, which treats the formation of Greene's personality and his early writings, his travels in West Africa and Mexico, his conversion to Catholicism and marriage to Vivien Dayrell-Browning, won the 1990 Edgar Allan Poe Award for that year's best critical-biographical study.

The biography is, however, as Greene himself observed, too detailed. Does one need to know, for example, when the author cut his first tooth? Although the copyediting of the second volume—not quite as hefty as the first—is substandard in that some passages are repeated, it is as meticulously researched and carefully documented as the initial volume (with one reservation: Greene couldn't have attended mass on Good Friday, as Sherry says he did, since that is the one day of the year when there is none). It takes the novelist from the London blitz to Vietnam, the period of his greatest creative work: *The Power and the Glory* (1940; U.S. title, *The Labyrinthine Ways*), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), *The End of the Affair* (1951)—"the trinity of novels upon which Greene's reputation rests,"—in addition to *The Quiet American* (1955), as well as the masterly film scripts *The Fallen Idol* (1948) and *The Third Man* (1949). These were also the years that saw the deterioration of Greene's marriage and his obsessive passion for the beautiful American Catherine Walston, whose husband was made a British peer.

Sherry, who has been given unique access to the novelist's private papers (some of which have false entries) and the right to quote without restriction, has also had the advantage of

✪ ANN M. BEGLEY's studies of Simone Weil and Marguerite Yourcenar have been published in *European Writers: The Twentieth Century.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

repeated interviews with his subject over the last two decades of his life, receiving answers to his queries even from Greene's deathbed in Switzerland. Treating the sensational matters in a manner that is candid but never prurient or exploitative, he is objective and non-judgmental in his approach. Michael Shelden, on the other hand, his narrative tone carping and hostile, has written what Joyce Carol Oates calls a "pathography": his is a portrait of a dishonorable and reprehensible man whose whole life was based on deception. Widely regarded as a Catholic writer, Greene's faith, Shelden claims, was a sham, nothing more than one of the many masks that he wore. Labeling his subject an anti-Semite, a traitor, and a sexual pervert, he strongly suggests that the author of *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays* (1951) was the perpetrator of the infamous Brighton Trunk Murder.

The charge of "an emerging pattern of anti-Semitism" in Greene's fiction—based largely on a repeated confusion between narrative and authorial voices, the novelist's reference to the word *Jew* as a descriptive term, and Shelden's perception of these characters as villainous or unappealing—is a problematic one. He gives as "the best-known example" Colleoni, the Jewish gangster of *Brighton Rock* (1938), yet it is the volume's harrowing protagonist Pinkie, a Catholic, who is the moral monster, a veritable study in evil; in fact, among the cast of major characters, only Rose is admirable. In the first of a two-part work, Anthony Mockler, the author of a book on Haile Selassie, argues—in opposition to Shelden's view—that the revolutionary poet in *The Name of Action* (1930), "a thin Jew," and the Jew of *Stamboul Train* (1932; U.S. title, *Orient Express*) are effective and heroic figures. He further asserts that there is nothing anti-Semitic in using *Jew* as a descriptive term, since this reflected a social reality: Jews were regarded as being different "in race, in appearance, and in behaviour." At any rate, when it was brought to Greene's attention that certain material in his books might be considered objectionable, he had it deleted from all later editions. It is worth noting, too, that, in 1981, Greene was invited to Israel as a guest of honor where he was awarded the Jerusalem Prize.

Shelden's inclination to arrive at spurious assumptions without reasoned deductions seriously mars his biography, the first complete account of the novelist's life. Pointing out an undercurrent of homosexuality that can be found here and there in Greene's fiction and speculating about events in his life, he comes to the more-than-questionable conclusion—one that Sherry rejects—that his subject was a clandestine homosexual. The insinuation that the author was a quasi-pedophile is based on gossip so dubious as to make his position untenable, and the suggestion—primarily the result of a kind of malevolent decoding of *Brighton Rock* and *Travels With My Aunt* (1969)—that the writer committed murder is nothing less than fantastic.

Shelden, the author of *George Orwell: The Authorized Biography*, never met Greene. Spurned by his subject's friends and relatives and denied access to his private papers, his research has, of necessity, been limited; at times he has felt obliged to refer to Sherry's work. Although he supplies the reader with some absorbing details that do not appear in any of the other accounts, his method of annotation is too general and inadequate. And whereas his observations are occasionally not without insight, for the most part his readings of the novels are impossible to take seriously and show little or no understanding of the theological concepts that are involved in Greene's most important works. What the books primarily reveal for this biographer is an author consumed by hate.

Always an adventurer, Greene was fascinated by espionage and the thrill of taking risks. As a youth, he had been prepared to act for foreign governments without scruple: while at Oxford, in exchange for expenses, he went to the French-occupied Rhineland for the purpose of informing the German embassy about the situation there. And at the conclusion of the civil war in Ireland, he wrote to the Free State Government in Dublin offering his services as a spy, to report from Ulster on the military dispositions in the British-occupied North; this, to be sure, has more than a strong flavor of treason. The Irish, ever wary of the English, refused his offer.

Much of Greene's fiction demonstrates a sharp understanding of this secret, underground world. In *Our Man in Havana* (1958), he deals with it from a comic point of view—satirizing secret agents and their bureaucratic superiors, while *The Human Factor* (1978),

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which treats the psychology of defection, has deep and serious overtones. During the Second World War he served in West Africa in the British secret intelligence service, where he once suggested opening a brothel as a means of suborning Vichy France; London rejected that idea. Upon his return to England, he was responsible for counter-espionage in the Iberian peninsula, working directly under the notorious double agent Kim Philby, with whom he became friends. Just when he was due for a promotion, Greene unexpectedly resigned from the secret service.

The question arises whether Greene knew more about Philby's treachery than he let on. Shelden, for one, suggests as much. In his sympathetic introduction to the defector's memoir, *My Silent War*, Greene writes: "He betrayed his country—yes, perhaps he did. But who among us has not committed treason to something or someone more important than a country?" His apparent belief in the sovereignty of the individual conscience, in the right to make moral decisions apart from group standards or codes, is the theme of *The Human Factor*, the novel inspired by the Philby case. The issues of loyalty and betrayal in a world where morality is seen as relative preoccupied the author in his personal life as well as in his fiction. The writer and the traitor corresponded and were reunited on several occasions when the novelist made visits to the Soviet Union.

In excusing his friend's treachery on the grounds that he had acted idealistically and not for personal gain, Greene, Philby's sole apologist, incurred the opprobrium of the nation's journalists. For tax purposes and reasons of health, he told an interviewer, he became an expatriate, moving to a modest two-room apartment in Antibes, France, in 1966, where he spent the remainder of his life (he also kept a larger apartment in Paris and a small villa in Anacapri). Whereas Shelden shows considerable respect for his subject's artistic powers, he regards him with contempt for his disloyalty, while Sherry offers the startling hypothesis, one shared by Evelyn Waugh, that Greene, though he was a genuine friend of Philby's, was actually serving a larger purpose: by maintaining contact with the traitor, he willingly bore the yoke of scandalized criticism in order to sustain a special allegiance to England. In the parlance of espionage, British intelligence had asked Greene, so Sherry holds, to turn the Soviet double agent into a triple agent, and, he adds, he just may have succeeded. Far from severing all his connections with the service, the inveterate traveler continued to pass on useful information, often in exchange for the cost of his passage—notably to and from Vietnam, Russia, Poland, and China. It was by means of the elaborate cover of displaying admiration for communist ideology while cultivating his anti-Americanism, Sherry declares, that the writer obtained the friendship of many left-wing leaders such as Castro, Torrijos, Allende, and Ortega. "Each held a significance for the 'old firm'. Perhaps to the end Greene played the Scarlet Pimpernel." Perhaps.

The early Greene books are romantic juvenilia that contain absurd, decorative images: "a revolver drooped like a parched flower to the pavement" or "the small drift of papers lay like winter between them, across the blown petals of the carpet." Abandoning turgidity, the ideal that Greene decided to strive for was perfect simplicity and precision; brevity and tautness; a prose bare and lucid, stripped of all non-essentials—like James Joyce, he aspired to a style of "scrupulous meanness." But he did not hesitate to make use of literary echoes, dream sequences, inner reveries, and arresting *pensées*—the latter one of the most distinguishable features of his writing. His journalistic experience is evident in the close and sharp observation of detail as well as the unemotional, detached point of view he maintains. Sparing of description, from *Brighton Rock* on, his fiction shows a distinct development of cinematic technique.

To support his growing family, Greene began writing fast-paced, tightly constructed thrillers with a modern and realistic setting—entertainments, he preferred to call them. Chief among these are *Stamboul Train*, *A Gun for Sale* (1936; U.S. title, *This Gun for Hire*), *The Confidential Agent* (1939), and *The Ministry of Fear* (1943). Then, in revolt against the "flatness of the Bloomsbury circle of writers," he committed himself to placing the melodrama in a religious or philosophical framework, thus enriching it. In this way, the novels and the entertainments so came to resemble each other that the categories he had initially established no longer seemed relevant. (Later, he revived the distinction with the publication of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Doctor Fischer of Geneva or the Bomb Party, 1980, described as a "black entertainment.")

Greene never pretended that his books were potboilers, as Faulkner did of *Sanctuary*. "Stories written purely for entertainment," he notes, "are almost invariably dull." As Shelden astutely points out, it was probably Eliot's support of the thriller as a reputable literary form, in his essay "Wilkie Collins and Dickens," that encouraged Greene to experiment with it. Eliot, whom Greene revered, failed to see why serious artistic purpose and high melodrama should not be integrated to form the basis of a great work of literature. *Brighton Rock* is—according to Shelden, and he is not alone here—the modern masterpiece that Eliot envisioned.

Greene's Roman Catholicism has been a subject of endless controversy. While Sherry and Mockler state unequivocally that it was of great importance to the writer both personally and professionally, Shelden sees it as nothing more than a pose that the novelist eventually abandoned when it was no longer useful. Religion had its appeal for a while, Shelden comments, as a system "teaming with powerful images, symbols, and immutable laws." An atheist, Greene began taking instruction in the faith—which he would later describe as "a malign virus from which one could never be cured"—to better understand and appreciate the beliefs of his fiancée, who was, and still is, a devout Catholic. Accepting Catholicism as an intellectual likelihood, he entered the Church when he was twenty-two. (Mockler is incorrect when he says that if Greene had not converted, Vivien would not have had the canonical right to marry him.)

It wasn't until *Brighton Rock*, however, begun as an entertainment but relabeled a novel as the book evolved into an exploration of good and evil juxtaposed to the secular values of right and wrong, that Greene overtly employed a frame of reference that is specifically Catholic. The acute sense of sin manifested in this psychological thriller and the emphasis placed on the possibility of eternal damnation tend to put off some non-Catholic readers, who cannot share the protagonists' supernatural vision. The novel, based on an actual series of murders that occurred in Brighton, is nonetheless compelling in the way that the presentation of evil always is in literature when handled by a master craftsman. Although *Stamboul Train* was his first popular success, it was *Brighton Rock* that established Greene's reputation as one of the leading English novelists of his time.

In an effort to escape the ennui, the inner spiritual torment that besieged him from boyhood on, the void within with its accompanying despair—which Sherry describes as "a fall in spirit of an unalterable intensity, a kind of plague spot"—Greene resorted to diversions of ever-increasing variety: alcohol, opium, attempted suicide, sexual adventures, traveling to troubled areas of the world "where life," he said, "was reinforced by the propinquity of death." Writing, too, was a way of escape from "the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation." It was this angst, perhaps, together with Greene's sporadic lack of orthodoxy and continual disregard of the Church's moral precepts regarding sexuality that led Shelden and others to conclude that his Catholicism was bogus. Although genuinely in love with Vivien, at least for the first ten years or so of their marriage, he was unfaithful to her from the very beginning, pursuing other women incessantly. At the time of the blitz, he lived with his mistress during the week in London where he served as air-raid warden, visiting his wife and two children in Oxford on weekends, while engaged in a passionate affair with Catherine Walston, who was to pervade his thoughts for over a decade.

The account of the several months Greene spent in Mexico in 1937–1938, the purpose of which was to report on the persecution of the Church in the northern province of Tobasco by the Socialist government in power, appears in the travel book *The Lawless Roads* (1939; U.S. title, *Another Mexico*); it proved to be—though that was not the author's original intention—a sketchbook for his greatest achievement, *The Power and the Glory*, which uses all the conventions of a first-class thriller embedded with the artistry of a serious novel. In the fictional account as in the historical one, all the churches have been demolished, any semblance of religious adherence is outlawed, and priests who do not submit to laicization and marriage are summarily shot. Through the moving story of a priest on the run, the author explores the function of the priesthood as a medium of grace, placing in relief the distinction between the man—the so-called whiskey priest who, in a moment of fear and loneli-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness, has fathered a child—and his office. As in *Brighton Rock*, he examines "the appalling . . . mystery of the mercy of God" moving through a ravaged world as well as other mystical concepts.

Critics categorized Greene as a "Catholic writer," but, like Flannery O'Connor, Julian Green, and Heinrich Böll, among others, he rejected this label, which implies an author of religious tracts, preferring to be known as a novelist—who happened to be Catholic—with his own special perception of reality. Greene repeatedly stated that he had no a priori edifying purpose in writing, but simply allowed himself to be carried along by the unforeseeable energies of his characters. (This is not to deny his view that the "religious sense" in fiction—to use Greene's terminology—is of great value in that it emphasizes the importance of the human act in the light of a possible eternity.) Because some of his characters espouse a personal—even a unique—interpretation of the Roman Catholic creed and value system, he was frequently accused of heresy, to which he would make the standard disclaimer that he was not responsible for the words and ideas of his characters: he created them and then let them go their own way. "The writer plays God," he once said, "until his creatures escape him." Then they impose their will on their creator and may even oblige him to change the direction of his novel. As he grew older, Greene reduced the five hundred words he initially disciplined himself to write every morning to two hundred, explaining that it was "tiring on the inner eye trying to follow the movements of your characters. Even if they're not on stage you feel you must know what they might be doing."

Greene always insisted that it is the novelist's duty to be objective so that all he experiences—even the most intimate—may be grist for the mill: he must have "a splinter of ice in the heart" that enables him to plunder ruthlessly the lives of others and his own for material. Sherry demonstrates, by comparing the novels with Greene's private papers, that his fiction mirrors, to varying degrees, his personal thoughts and history. His first-published novel *The Man Within* (1929), for example, the title a quotation from Sir Thomas Browne, indicative of the protagonist's divided self and his interior struggle, echoes Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans: "There is another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

To Malcolm Muggeridge's observation that Greene had a dual personality that he was unable to fuse into any kind of harmony, Sherry adds that the Mr. Hyde side was nasty and brutish, his mood one of raillery. Like Greene's initial reverence for Vivien, Andrews's love for Elizabeth is "ecstatic and religious . . . the sexual side of their relationship . . . approached . . . with awe." His need to escape temporarily from Elizabeth, in whom he sees "a kind of sanctity which blurred and obscured his desire with love," parallels the author's compulsion to betray his wife for a woman he could enjoy uncluttered by love. Sherry remarks that just as Andrews believes that he cannot love Elizabeth physically without soiling her, so Greene thought Vivien too fine for human sexuality.

The Heart of the Matter reflects both the troubled state of Greene's marriage and the mounting tension in his relationship with Dorothy, whom he no longer loved. The protagonist Scobie, Sherry observes, is to a large extent the novelist's emotional and psychological double in that his love entanglements and serious religious commitment are Greene's own, just as Fowler in *The Quiet American*—a prescient account of early American involvement in Vietnam—is, in Sherry's view, a surrogate for the author in all but his atheism. The unnamed minor character in this provocatively political novel, who, fearful of an imminent death, seeks out a priest to hear his confession, turns out to be, Greene's diary discloses, the novelist himself. And the farcical parody *Travels With My Aunt*, a literary and autobiographical game the author is playing with the reader, contains a long series of comical allusions to his life and work.

The End of the Affair—the first novel to put aside entirely the devices of mystery, criminality, and intrigue—is a close transcript of Greene's relationship with Henry and Catherine Walston. The book, dedicated to "C" in the English edition and to "Catherine" in the American one, deals with the secret passion of Maurice Bendrix (Greene), a middle-aged novelist who narrates the story, and Sarah (Catherine), the wife of Henry Miles, a senior civil servant. Bendrix, like his creator, is dedicated to writing, turning out five hundred

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

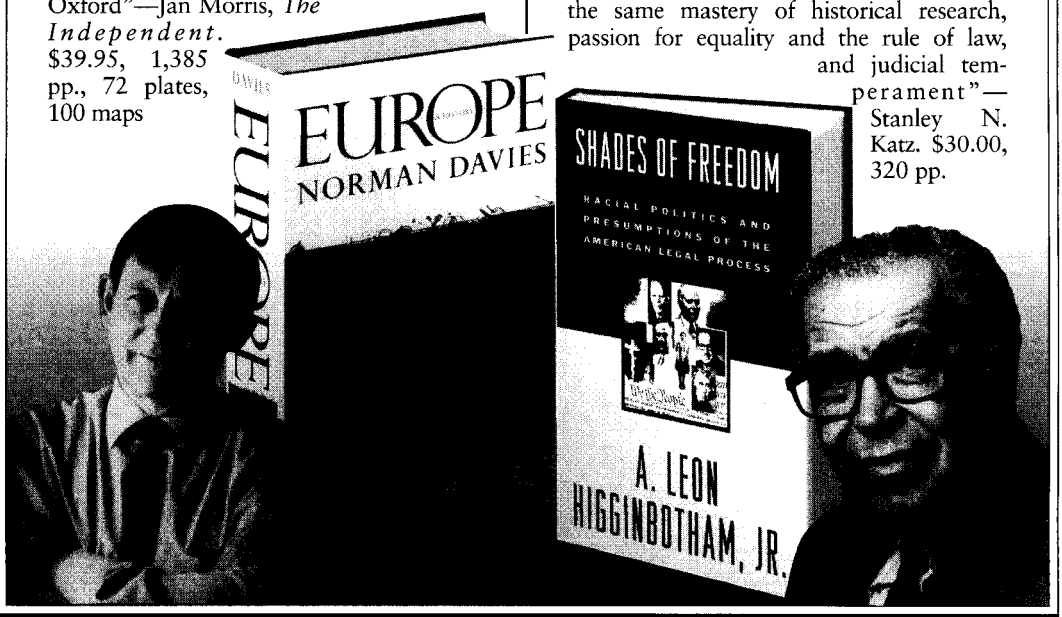
Two Major Works of History

EUROPE: A History
NORMAN DAVIES

"One of those great books for whom the critic's 'must read' verdict should be truly heeded"—*The Times (London)*. "Brims with learning, crackles with common sense, coruscates with wit and abounds in good judgement"—*Sunday Times* (London). "Written with intelligence, lucidity, and a breathtaking width of knowledge. Its perceptions are often surprising and always refreshing. This is a book everyone should read"—A.C. Grayling, *The Financial Times*. "A work of unprecedented inquisitiveness and exuberance. His own fascination with the subject sparkles on every page.... Quirky and impulsive, sometimes ironic and sometimes passionate, with a magpie's eye for anecdotes, coincidences, bons mots and other glinting oddities.... Davies never loses his own focus or the reader's interest. His is a book that cannot fail to stimulate any reader"—*The Sunday Telegraph*. "A noble monument of scholarship....One of the most important and illuminating history books ever to be published by Oxford"—Jan Morris, *The Independent*. $39.95, 1,385 pp., 72 plates, 100 maps

SHADES OF FREEDOM
Racial Politics and Presumptions in The American Legal Process
A. LEON HIGGINBOTHAM, JR.

"Higginbotham's masterful work is a compelling and convincing examination of how the law developed the official American doctrine of racial inferiority"—Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton. "Written with the eloquence of a Martin Luther King, the scholarship of a W.E.B. Du Bois, and the superb legal craftsmanship and wisdom of Chief Justice Warren and Thurgood Marshall"—Kweisi Mfume, President, NAACP. "*In Shades of Freedom* one of our greatest legal minds makes a powerful case for turning the use of law to the service of justice. Judge Higginbotham carefully explains the role of law in reinforcing the concept of African American inferiority since the colonial period"—Mary Frances Berry, Chairperson, United States Commission on Civil Rights. "As remarkable a book as Leon Higginbotham's magnificent *In The Matter of Color.* It reflects the same mastery of historical research, passion for equality and the rule of law, and judicial temperament"—Stanley N. Katz. $30.00, 320 pp.



At better bookstores. Or call 1-800-451-7556 (M-F, 9-5 EST) • OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS www.oup-usa.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

words a day. Sarah's fictional journal, Sherry reports, is based on Catherine's, and Catherine personally vetted the volume since so much of it was culled from their lives and love. In contrast with the early novels, which manifest an antithesis between sacred and profane love, *The End of the Affair*—as in Paul Claudel's *The City*, the writings of Marguerite Yourcenar and Evelyn Waugh, as well as much of the work of François Mauriac who maintained that "there is only one Love"—expresses the thought that ephemeral human love, which cannot satisfy the universal inner longing, is, in some arcane and obscure way, an unknowing search for God. Sarah, finally aware that her love for Maurice was only a stage to something more profound and more sublime, recalls the total abandonment with which she and Bendrix gave themselves to each other and wonders if perhaps all the time He was there, encouraging them to squander their love so that when they finished, there would be nothing left but Himself.

Years after his separation from Vivien, Greene "excommunicated" himself, joining "the Foreign Legion of the Church." Yet he continued to attend Sunday mass despite the fact that he began to shed one dogma after another and have increasing doubts about the existence of a personal deity. Eventually, when asked, he was wont to describe himself as a "Catholic agnostic," explaining that he had less and less belief every day but more and more faith. (From a theological standpoint, there can exist a valid tension between faith and rational disbelief.) This situation informs much of his later fiction—in particular *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961), where the apparent absence of God is the paradoxical proof of His existence. The religious sense is present in many of the later novels, even when the protagonists have practically no metaphysical dimension, in that the author depicts—in the same way Camus does in *The Plague*—secular man alienated from the *Deus Absconditus*. As one critic has noted, the characters that inhabit Greene's variegated world carry the scar of a primal wound, which, in the autobiographical *A Sort of Life* (1971), the author reveals to be his own.

In sharp contrast to Shelden's sinister account, there is the memoir by Greene's ardent admirer, Father Leopoldo Duráno, who had studied the writer's work for many years in his native Spain, where he taught English literature at the University of Madrid. Having met in the early 1970s and become friends, the author and the priest corresponded and took vacations together in Spain, France, and Portugal. A mutual trust was built up, we are told, in what amounts to selected passages from sixteen detailed diaries of their conversations and travels, which Duráno kept at Greene's suggestion. Their relationship forms the basis for the picaresque novel *Monsignor Quixote* (1982), a caricature of the hierarchy of the Church and communism as well as a touching study of friendship, despite opposing faiths. Declaring that he writes only about the Graham Greene he personally knew, Father Duráno portrays his subject as shy, humble, courteous, affectionate, a simple and deeply private man who was extremely sensitive to the suffering of others, and modest in his personal living habits. Late in life, the novelist returned to the sacraments and, together with Duráno, made an annual retreat at the Trappist monastery of Osera. As Greene lay dying in the Hôpital de la providence on the shores of Lake Geneva, following his instructions, the priest was summoned to his side to administer the last rites of the Church.

Duráno's reverence for Graham Greene leads him to extol the virtues of his friend almost to the point of hagiography. The authorial "I," ever present, seems bent on impressing the reader with the fact that he was Greene's sole confidant. Disorganized, irritatingly sentimental, repetitive, and very poorly translated, the volume is nonetheless of value in the personal details it reports: the novelist's literary views and method of writing, his opinions on Church policies and doctrines, his conception of the United States as a nation consumed by self-interest, his dignified and "exemplary" death. The book is also of interest in that it supports the thesis that the writer was more of a Catholic—as multi-faceted as his Catholicism was—than Shelden is willing to concede.

Greene's oeuvre comprises more than twenty novels or entertainments, novellas, short stories, children's books, a volume of verse, plays, numerous political and literary essays, travel books, a biography, screen scenarios, hundreds of film and book reviews, and two volumes of autobiography (in which very little of his personal life is revealed). Although he ex-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

plored a variety of literary genres, it is primarily for his fiction that he is remembered. Much honored as an eminent author of international stature, the recipient of a plethora of awards, he was expected time and again to receive literature's highest prize, the Nobel, but he never did. The fact that he enjoyed a mass audience, using the thriller as a vehicle of serious thought, caused a number of academic critics to dismiss him as merely a writer of entertainments. Yet there is, of course, precedence. When the fictive Holly Martins (*The Third Man*), speaking to a literary club, announces that an important influence on his work was Zane Grey, someone in the audience protests, "He was just a popular entertainer," to which Martins replies angrily, "Why the hell not? . . . What was Shakespeare?" Like Dickens and Conrad, Greene took a popular fictional form and raised it to an artistry that few other writers of the period attained.

Consciously, or unconsciously, what every writer makes incarnate in his work is his own complex self. Greene is inextricably and powerfully present in virtually everything he has written, a fact that makes his novels all the more captivating, even poignant. But, since an author's personal drama is invariably amended by the imagination and distorted by his misunderstanding of who or what he is, of what has actually transpired in his life, reconstructing history from fiction is fraught with hazard. Then, too, as the conflicting views expressed by Graham Greene's biographers indicate, each lens through which a reader reads books is unique, and, perhaps, therein lies the real problem.

Old Acquaintances

LATE BLOOMERS. *By Brendan Gill. Artisan. $14.95.*

Reviewed by MORRIS FREEDMAN

This little book is as charming in look and feel as in content. Barely five and a half by seven inches, it is slightly larger than the common paperback and a little heavier, though not as thick. The front hard cover has fuzzy, gently colored pictures of Julia Child, President Truman, Colonel Sanders, and Coco Chanel, variously beloved senior icons in modern mythology; and the rear, a small beaming photograph of the maker of the book, the octogenarian Brendan Gill, in a sweater.

The dust jacket is translucent, further obscuring the pictures in a pleasant nostalgic haze. Inside, each pair of open pages carries text on the left and a likeness of the subject, often in color, on the right, except for Mr. Gill's elegant foreword and afterword and the several pages of contents and wise sayings about old age. The paper is satisfyingly thick and polished.

Mr. Gill's seventy-six late bloomers range from Larry Aldrich, ninety-six, the still-living creator and director of a small museum of modern art in Connecticut, to Zeppelin, 1838–1917, the count, "whose name," in Gill's words, "has become the generic term for a certain kind of lighter-than-air machine, invented late in his life and successfully flown years before the Wright brothers found themselves swooping over the dunes at Kitty Hawk."

By "late bloomers," Gill means only that the persons have continued to thrive into later life, perhaps more spectacularly toward the end, at times bursting into a climactic bloom, "who," to quote Gill, "at whatever cost and under whatever circumstances have succeeded in finding themselves." He celebrates persons who have simply been steadily productive over a substantial lifetime, as well as some, like Ian Fleming, who didn't make it out of their fifties. We get a good number of classically known personages, like Montaigne, Jonathan Swift, Laurence Sterne, Charles Darwin, Joseph Conrad, Pope John XXIII, Grandma Moses, Mother Teresa. Pictures tend to emphasize a relaxed confidence or good cheer. Julia Child, with her mischievous smile, wine glass in one hand and done lobster in the other, looks well advanced in contentment.

The texts for each subject, none longer than a page, are deliciously succinct, more concerned with the quality of the person than with extended biographical detail. Gill cherishes piquant morsels and revealing anecdotes. Thus we learn of Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985) that "[becoming] a fashionable artist, he went on railing with his usual perverse gusto against fashion. Rich, he salved his con-

✪ MORRIS FREEDMAN is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Maryland.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

science by wearing blue jeans and nursing his lifelong gift for wrath."

Gill tells us of Buckminster Fuller (1895–1983) that "[he] would speak at Ciceronian length, hour after hour, and once at a public gathering had to be lifted bodily off the stage in order to permit other speakers their rightful turns." He describes Julia Child being "especially cherished as a presence on TV: tall, stout, imperturbable in the face of unlooked-for culinary accidents, and with a hint in her well-bred voice and manner of a just barely concealed clownishness."

Most of us are likely to have frozen in our minds the characters of many of his hall-of-famers, but Gill includes bright vignettes that thaw the statuary. He concludes his text on Edith Wharton (1862–1937) with the following: "When [Henry] James visited her [in Massachusetts], they rejoiced in going automobiling together. In goggles and linen dusters, they sat in the back of a big open car and urged the chauffeur to go faster and faster along the narrow, winding roads of the Berkshire hills: middle-aged children contentedly at play." James himself doesn't make the volume.

To describe a style, Gill supplies illuminating tidbits. "On graduating from Yale," Gill writes, "[Charles] Ives moved to New York, where selling insurance by day and composing by night, he introduced into his compositions the rattle of trolley cars and other urban noises."

This array of bloomers is happily self-indulgent, whimsical and arbitrary, a choice by chance almost, although all share a certain intellectual correctness. Gill includes several architects, photographers, and designers, for example, known mainly in the profession, reflecting his own late career as commentator on architecture for *The New Yorker*, after serving many years as its drama critic and a senior editor.

While Mr. Gill's choices and text may be unfocused and occasionally precious, testifying to complex, omnivorous, urbane, quirky, arch, catholic tastes and interests, the randomness and chronological spread stress the universal aspect of late blooming: we realize that the condition is reassuringly widespread and long established.

I suspect many readers will find themselves wondering idly, as I did, why he didn't include such memorable bloomers as Marjorie Nicolson, John Milton, Jacques Barzun, Cicero, Cervantes, Edmund Wilson, Casey Stengel, Karl and Groucho Marx, George Burns, Audrey and Katharine Hepburn, Rosa Parks, Emma Goldman, Burl Ives, Clement Greenberg, Wallace Stevens, Red Auerbach, Joseph Wood Krutch, all of whom flourished late and long and as colorfully as any of the fashionable honorees in the book. But then, of course, any of us could come up with such lists. We can all throw our own joyous parties of ancients we like to remember, with Mr. Gill himself as an admired guest and only a few of his own favorites.

The book belongs in the waiting room of every specialist who counsels those struggling with the uncertainties of retirement and the discouragements of aging. It is solid evidence, as Mr. Gill wants us to understand, that later years are just another time for living productively and fulfillingly. The effect of the work is not so much inspirational as restorative.

Liberal Persuasions

THE LINCOLN PERSUASION: REMAKING AMERICAN LIBERALISM. *By J. David Greenstone. Princeton University Press. $24.95. Paper, $13.95.*

Reviewed by CHARLES L. GRISWOLD, JR.

The American Founding was to an extraordinary extent the undertaking of classically educated and philosophically informed statesmen. They worked against the background of a long history of debates about the centrality of virtue to political life, about the problem of reconciling the individual's pursuit of self-perfection and the community's pursuit of more mundane goods, and generally about the paradoxes involved in pursuing a political ideal in a world known to be irremediably imperfect. When Madison wrote in the 49th *Federalist* that "a nation of philosophers is as little to be expected as the philosophical race of kings wished for by Plato," he continued a tra-

✪ CHARLES L. GRISWOLD, JR., is Chairman and Professor of Philosophy at Boston University.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PITTSBURGH
Presents

Parlor Radical
Rebecca Harding Davis and the Origins of American Social Realism
Jean Pfaelzer
"A major study of the writings of a major writer"—Jean Fagan Yellin. "Sophisticated and comprehensive"—Carolyn Karcher. "A pleasure to read"—Paul Lauter
Cloth $29.95

Vaquita and Other Stories
Edith Pearlman
Winner of the 1996 Drue Heinz Literature Prize, selected by Rosellen Brown
Cloth $22.50

Pittsburgh Surveyed
Social Science and Social Reform in the Early Twentieth Century
Maurine W. Greenwald and Margo Anderson, Editors
"Like the original Pittsburgh Survey, this book is a treasure trove for historians and other social scientists."—Kathryn Kish Sklar
Cloth $49.95 / paper $22.95

Art and Archaeology of Pre-Columbian Cuba
Ramón Dacal Moure and Manuel Rivero de la Calle
The art of the first Cubans—the Ciboneys and the Tainos—not previously accessible to U.S. scholars.
Cloth $35.00

Edmund Burke and India
Political Morality and Empire
Frederick Whelan
"Powerful and persuasive"—Isaac Kramnick. "All scholars and admirers of Burke are in [Whelan's] debt"—Harvey C. Mansfield
Cloth $49.95

The Cosmos of Science
Essays of Exploration
John Earman and John D. Norton, Editors
Essays in history of science, foundations of mathematics and physics, induction and scientific methodology, and action and rationality.
Cloth $75.00

Polish Americans and Their History
Community, Culture, and Politics
John J. Bukowczyk, Editor
"Richly detailed, readable essays"—Anthony Bukowski
Cloth $49.95

Pedagogy
Disturbing History, 1819-1929
Mariolina Rizzi Salvatori
"An original contribution to knowledge"—Geraldine Jonçich Clifford. "Is this book needed? Absolutely"—John Brereton
Cloth $49.95

Triumphant Capitalism
Henry Clay Frick and the Industrial Transformation of America
Kenneth Warren
"A detailed, carefully wrought business biography"—Van Beck Hall
Cloth $35.00

Fifty Years Later
Antislavery, Capitalism and Modernity in the Dutch Orbit
Gert Oostindie, Editor
"This is a work that no student of slavery or antislavery should ignore"—David Brion Davis
Cloth $45.00 / paper $22.50

CREDIT CARD ORDERS CALL 607-277-2211 OR WRITE

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH PRESS

CUP SERVICES, BOX 6525, ITHACA, NY 14851

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dition of political reflection begun by Plato himself.

J. David Greenstone's remarkable *The Lincoln Persuasion* shows how these ancient questions and debates illuminate American liberalism from the Founding through Lincoln. As the title of this posthumously published book suggests, Lincoln created a "persuasion" (a coherent and rhetorically effective moral and political outlook) that remade or recast competing strands of American liberalism. While Greenstone's book seems to have been reasonably polished before he died, chapters on Frederick Douglass, Daniel Webster, and Lydia Maria Child were planned but not completed. Small parts of the text were provided by others, but the authorship is generally clear.

Historians often proceed on an intuitive basis, without an articulated theory of explanation. Greenstone takes the opposite tack and has written a re-interpretation of American liberalism that includes discussion of the principles of sound interpretation. One layer of the inquiry concerns what Greenstone calls his "metatheory"—that is, his basic assumptions about the nature of historical explanation, evidence, and adequacy. What are those assumptions?

Greenstone finds his answer in, of all places, the writing of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Since Greenstone denies that he is providing an interpretation of Wittgenstein, it seems pointless to pursue the complex question of Greenstone's faithfulness to Wittgenstein's philosophy. The basic idea is that the "root error" of reductionist accounts is that they assume a causal relationship between words and deeds, as though the two, in history, can always be clearly separated. But speeches and practices in fact blend together in a culture, forming "human practices or life forms" in ways that embody a set of rules. Correspondingly, what the words and rules mean is a function of the context, of how they work in a given practice. In interpreting what the Founders meant and were doing, we must be attentive to the interplay of sayings and doings, to the complex web of social engagements, actions, and responses. Greenstone's book argues at length that the liberal consensus contained within it a crucial bipolarity of "humanist liberalism" and "reform liberalism."

Humanist liberalism is marked by a view of reason as fundamentally instrumental, of ends as defined by individual preferences that are not themselves subject to rational criticism, of preferences as the most ethically relevant features of self, and of political liberty as primarily "negative" (that is—as stating limits of the authority of the goverment and society to intrude upon the lives of individuals). Individuals come furnished with "natural rights," a doctrine that specifies the liberty of the individual to pursue whatever end his or her preferences or passions dictate so long as others are left equally free to do the same. Humanist liberalism is fundamentally secular and materialist, its ethics consequentialist and proto-utilitarian. Greenstone finds the roots of this outlook in Locke, and its first-generation American representative in Jefferson.

The dissenting "reform" tradition is termed, somewhat confusingly, a "broadly Kantian ethic." Greenstone's central point is that in this tradition reason is viewed as capable of evaluating ends and not merely as instrumental. Preferences are not givens that are beyond rational examination. Political liberty acquires a positive side; advocates of reform liberalism do not believe that individuals can be politically free unless they are free of the tyranny of their own passions. Political liberty requires each individual to govern him- or herself in accordance with a vision of a perfected or fulfilled self. Reform liberals are virtue theorists guided by an ideal of human excellence. Correspondingly, a task of politics is to assist citizens in becoming free—that is, better human beings. This outlook tends to stress personal improvement and to justify paternalistic intervention in the lives of the citizens. Greenstone cites the temperance movement, the movement for public funding of education, the civil rights movement, and feminist agendas as examples of reform liberalism. John Adams exemplifies this perfectionist position in the Founding period. In part 2 of his book Greenstone draws out the nascent conflict between Adams and Jefferson concerning these rival interpretations of the meaning of liberalism. The wonderfully interesting correspondence between the aging Adams and the still vigorous Jefferson provides Greenstone with ample basis for reconstructing their family quarrel.

The debate between the two liberalisms is carried further, and in a sense radicalized, in the second generation (for Greenstone, Lin-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coln is a third-generation American political figure). Greenstone uses the slavery issue as an effective lever for prying open ethical commitments and failures. He portrays key Jacksonian Democrats such as William Leggett, Martin Van Buren, and Stephen A. Douglas as committed humanist liberals. Reform liberalism is sustained in the second generation by John Quincy Adams, who, Greenstone argues, became the conscience of the North on the slavery question and scorned the view that the Declaration of Independence was restricted in its application to a racial group. Adams is a virtue theorist who "focused on intention, rather than on consequences or desires," who tied virtue closely to intention and character, and who declared (in his own words) that "virtue . . . was the foundation of republican government." Yet Adams also explicitly valued (to quote him again) "prudence and caution," both as general policy and with respect to slavery, and shared the general commitments of "genus liberalism." Greenstone characterizes Adams's position as "tension-ridden" and ultimately untenable.

The uneasy "founding synthesis" of the two liberalisms finally collapsed under the pressure of the slavery issue. That slavery so pervaded the context in which the legitimacy of liberal institutions was forcefully defended seems to testify to a contradiction embedded in the heart of American liberalism. How, then, to reconcile a perfectionist moral position with the recognition that in a most imperfect world prudence is required for effective reform? How to prevent one's politics from degenerating into rationalization or into quietistic cultivation of one's own soul?

These classical questions set the stage for Greenstone's culminating analysis of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's great achievement was to renew the synthesis. "Lincoln's ethic asserted a *union* of piety with prudential rationality, and of sainthood with citizenship," Greenstone wrote. He now provides a more fine-grained picture of the poles that define the spectrum of possible positions. One pair of poles is defined by notions of prudent satisfaction of preferences, on the one hand, and pursuit of perfection on the other. Another pair of poles consists of satisfaction or perfection of oneself as an individual, on the one hand, and satisfaction or perfection of the community, on the other. Greenstone convincingly argues that this typology of ethical positions evolved out of colonial Calvinism, even as it summarizes an important set of possible philosophical positions. Greenstone situates Lincoln as occupying the mean between all four poles.

In this scheme, Lincoln is first of all a reform liberal guided by a doctrine of ethical perfection and a vision of moral equality. Greenstone repeatedly characterizes Lincoln as an advocate of "ethical perfectionism" or "Kantian perfectionism." Lincoln leaned in the direction of a conception of "positive" liberty. Yet Lincoln also did not believe it possible to perfect oneself without engaging in the activity of perfecting one's community. Perfection is essentially a communal matter: "For Lincoln . . . there was a symbiotic relationship between individual development and the institutional life of a community." Lincoln emphasized the ethical relevance of intellectual inquiry as well as the importance of social cooperation for progress of inquiry over time. Greenstone discerns an anticipation of late-nineteenth-century Pragmatism in Lincoln's emphasis on a community of inquiry and practice. While for Jefferson public service was an onerous duty not intrinsically connected with his cultivation of self, for Lincoln pursuit of perfection of self and of political perfection were inseparable. One achieves virtue or ethical excellence in bringing about the same qualities for the polity.

Lincoln's perfectionism was, according to Greenstone, "necessarily and explicitly gradualist." Precisely because of the connection between personal and political perfection, the desirability of securing the latter over the long haul of many generations, and the Whiggish conviction that the obstacles to moral improvement could be overcome only through a lengthy struggle, Lincoln's emphasis was on the direction of a policy based on clear moral principle rather than immediate implementation of that policy. Prudent gradualism was a synthesis of morality and politics. Lincoln would claim that this did not degenerate into rationalization. Lincoln was willing both to prosecute an extraordinarily bloody civil war rather than give up the principles in question *and* to refuse to endorse a call for immediate emancipation of and citizenship for all slaves.

What cultural resources did Lincoln possess in order to make this persuasion convincing?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He brought together several strains of ethical thought—namely, Puritan and New England Calvinist beliefs to the effect that one's ethical stand and a well-crafted and prudent political program for implementing it are inseparable; inherited respect for the authority of the truths enunciated in the Declaration; egalitarian currents prevalent in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American society; the belief that the Union had "a world-historic mission as an exemplary republic"; the Puritan idea of the covenant (fleshed out to apply to the people of the United States and their special responsibilities under this "ancient faith"); and, finally, the standard commitments of "genus liberalism."

Greenstone's rich, provocative, and illuminating narrative of the evolution of American liberalism is a useful corrective to one-sided interpretations of the American Enlightenment. He rightly insists that key disagreements among such figures as Jefferson, Adams, Douglas, and Lincoln are at their core philosophical. Greenstone leaves us wondering, however, both whether Lincoln's synthesis of competing elements in American liberalism is genuinely new within that tradition and why it should not be thought quite as "tension-ridden" as, say, that of John Adams. In his varying characterizations of Lincoln's relation to the Founding Fathers, Greenstone seems unsure about the extent of Lincoln's originality. We hear that Lincoln " . . . devised solutions that built upon and surpassed the solutions of his predecessors," that he "embodied a new cultural synthesis, or, perhaps better, a resynthesis," that he brought about a "more complex synthesis [and a] reworking [of] the founding synthesis." These phrases conceal important ambiguities. If Lincoln revives the Founders' original synthesis, and if the source of the tension at the theoretical level is the effort to unify a perfectionism with a humanist doctrine of prudence, how has Lincoln surpassed the earlier perfectionist liberals?

The question is not academic. If Lincoln rescued the Union from permanent division and advanced the causes of liberty and morality thanks to a brilliant and successful "resynthesis" of the Founders' liberalism, then perhaps the logic of the development of American liberalism does not lead to disintegration. A Lincolnian reappropriation of the original synthesis may be warranted if the downward spiral in which the nation finds itself is to be reversed. But if the project of the American Enlightenment is inherently tension-ridden and unstable, then a new synthesis, not a resynthesis, is in order. It matters whether our present condition represents a failure to be faithful to the original synthesis or, on the contrary, whether the original is unstable in a way that has led dialectically to our present condition.

The grave challenges we face today, it seems to me, are not entirely dissimilar to those that faced Lincoln. Yet the resources in our political culture and public philosophy for responding to current internal disintegration seem much slimmer than those available to Lincoln, as the uninspiring rhetoric of recent presidential campaigns suggests. In spite of occasional movements inspired by religion, our public discourse is almost entirely secular and consists mostly of the contested vocabulary of autonomy, rights, values, respect, equality, choice, pluralism. We hear talk about the virtues, duties owed to the community, and the importance of institutions that nourish ethical character. These responses amount to an effort to revive the perfectionist or "reform" strain of American liberalism. Whether or not our culture is susceptible to any such persuasion this time around is an open question. A virtue of Greenstone's book is that it helps us to articulate the question and to see it as one that is both essentially American and philosophical.

Certain Uncomfortable Facts

T. S. ELIOT, ANTI-SEMITISM, AND LITERARY FORM. *By Anthony Julius. Cambridge University Press. $49.95.*

Reviewed by EVELYN TOYNTON

On hearing that someone has written a book on the anti-Semitism of T. S. Eliot, one may be tempted to respond with a groan. We've already seen Mark Twain slammed for his racism and Willa Cather censured for not

✪ EVELYN TOYNTON writes for the *New York Times Book Review, Commentary,* and other publications.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

caring enough about the plight of the American Indian; is every writer in the canon to be accused of injustice to one minority group or another?

In the case of Eliot, the allegation seems particularly ominous, a further sign, if one were needed, that nothing is any longer sacred. For so long, he had seemed unassailable—the high priest of high art, the last true monument and authority in English letters. As the radical innovator who was also the inheritor and conservator of all of Western culture, he was literally worshiped by other poets, whose biographies and memoirs are full of tales of their adulation of him. His critical pronouncements in his essays took on the weight of judgments from on high, while toward the end of his life even the general public treated him as they did Einstein, flocking to greet him at airports and lining the streets to cheer him. So strong was his aura of cultural sainthood that it seems presumptuous to approach him in anything but a spirit of awe.

And yet the reverence Eliot has been accorded has always entailed the refusal to acknowledge certain uncomfortable facts. Perhaps chief among these is the curiously nasty tone of much of his poetry. Whereas Yeats's manifold hatreds are passionate, even exultant, Eliot's voice, in all but the greatest of the poems that pre-date his conversion to Anglicanism, is full of sour revulsion, as mean-spirited as it is magisterial. Though *The Waste Land* and *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* achieve a note of elegiac despair, most of the early work does not aspire that high; its prevailing tone is one of nauseated loathing, not all of which seems ascribable to the post-war disillusionment of his generation.

Which brings us to the question of what might be called the pathological elements in Eliot's work. Perhaps cowed by his own dictum that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates," or perhaps because they are so intent on what is difficult in his work that they fail to see what is obvious, few critics have ever remarked on its disturbing psychological subtext. Thus, his admirers have praised the "dense allusiveness" of a poem like "Sweeney Erect," its "concern for upholding the classical tradition," while ignoring the fact that it is absolutely crawling with sexual repugnance:

New in paperback

"Could well be the most important discussion of style since the great classical rhetoricians."—Wayne C. Booth

Clear and Simple as the Truth

Writing Classic Prose

Francis-Noël Thomas and Mark Turner

"A work of great intellectual elegance and power. I have read it with a lot of pleasure, admiring the wisdom and economy of its reflections and the extraordinary range of its citations."
—Claude Rawson

"*Clear and Simple as the Truth* holds the promise of raising the level of the nation's prose. . . . The book is full of cogency and insight."—Frederick Crews

Paper: $14.95 ISBN 0-691-02917-2 *Due January*

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

AVAILABLE AT FINE BOOKSTORES OR DIRECTLY FROM THE PUBLISHER: 800-777-4726
WORLD WIDE WEB SITE: HTTP://PUP.PRINCETON.EDU

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gesture of orang-outang
Rises from the sheets in steam.

This withered root of knots of hair
Slitted below and gashed with eyes,
This oval O cropped out with teeth:
The sickle motion from the thighs

Jackknifes upward at the knees . . .

And other poems of this period are equally permeated by hatred of the flesh, not in a religious sense—religion came later, would seem to have been his escape from the condition of horror—but in a way that seems downright embarrassing: the poet is telling us something he doesn't *know* he is telling.

Given all this, what seems unfortunate about Anthony Julius's book, which has been much acclaimed, is not so much his daring to criticize Eliot as the narrowness of his point of view, a narrowness that forces him to shy away from the larger issues he half-raises and then drops. By concentrating wholly on Eliot's "lack of sympathy" for Jews, he misses the chance to address Eliot's chilling lack of sympathy for just about everybody.

Nevertheless, it seems unfair of Julius's detractors, who are almost as numerous as his admirers, to claim that he is merely telling the world what it already knew perfectly well. Although others have remarked on Eliot's anti-Semitism before now, the majority of his critics have totally ignored it. One can find whole discussions of "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar" (in which Bleistein's "lustreless protrusive eye / Stares from the protozoic slime / At a perspective of Canaletto" and "The rats are underneath the piles / The jew [*sic*] is underneath the lot") that praise "the dual function, private as well as public, to which the not inconsiderable learning packed into it is put"; that explicate, at length, its "network of allusions"; that call it "perhaps the best of Eliot's exercises in semi-comic satire"; and that discuss the parallels between Bleistein and Sweeney (both are incapable of appreciating classical culture, both are a threat to classical virtues) without once remarking on its anti-Semitism.

Peter Ackroyd, one of Eliot's recent biographers, in a bland paragraph dismissing the charge of anti-Semitism, contends that "there are only two egregious instances of anti-Semitism in all his published work," citing "The jew is underneath the lot" (while failing to note that the preceding line is "The rats are underneath the piles") and a notorious sentence in *After Strange Gods* that excludes Jews from Eliot's ideal Christian society: "reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable." Apparently Bleistein's lustreless protrusive eye staring from the protozoic slime, and the "jew" who "squats on the windowsill" in "Gerontion," "Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp, / Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London" are *non*-egregious instances of anti-Semitism: it reminds one of the old Jewish joke that defines anti-Semitism as "hating Jews more than is absolutely necessary." Such passages make Julius's book less superfluous than his critics claim.

Even those who have grappled with the issue more seriously are often so determined to exonerate Eliot that they tie themselves into knots. The one really lively part of Julius's book is the section in which he examines the various assumptions about poetry that underlie critics' defenses of Eliot: the notion that poetry, unlike mere prose, should not be construed as containing explicit views; the notion that poetry is by nature redemptive, and therefore there must be something redemptive in these works; the notion that poetry necessarily enlarges our sympathies through its imaginative association with its subject. (Certain critics have even managed to persuade themselves that the poems in question are "touched with pity" and that Eliot is revealing his "identification with the rejected.") Like the good lawyer that he is—the lawyer, in fact, chosen by Princess Diana to represent her in her divorce case—Julius ruthlessly demolishes these constructs, one by one.

He also pretty much destroys the final argument for the defense: that Eliot repudiated his anti-Semitism when he capitalized "Jew" in later reprintings of the poems and refused to allow *After Strange Gods* to be republished. Such actions, he points out, hardly constitute a recantation, especially since Eliot denigrated the book as a whole without ever referring specifically to the anti-Semitic passage. He also read "Gerontion" at a public reading in London in 1943, when everyone knew what was happening to the Jews in Europe, and never ceased praising Charles Maurras, the fanatical anti-Semite and Nazi collaborator.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW BOOKS FROM SIU PRESS...

Let My People Go

Cairo, Illinois, 1967–1973

Civil Rights Photographs
by **Preston Ewing Jr.**
Edited by **Jan Peterson Roddy**
ISBN 0-8093-2085-1, cloth **$49.95**
ISBN 0-8093-2086-X, paper **$19.95**
124 pages, 8 1/2 x 11 inches
110 duotone plates

▪On-the-scene photography, eyewitness narration, and archival material enable the reader to look behind the scenes of a powerful grass-roots movement that evolved into the last great civil rights struggle of the 1960s.

Pornography and the Justices

The Supreme Court and the Intractable Obscenity Problem

Richard F. Hixson
ISBN 0-8093-2057-6, cloth **$29.95**
285 pages

▪Hixson examines the various ways the United States Supreme Court—the individual justices as well as the collective body—has dealt over time with the intractable problem of obscenity.

Twentieth-Century Italian Women Writers

The Feminine Experience

Alba Amoia
ISBN 0-8093-2026-6, cloth **$39.95**
ISBN 0-8093-2027-4, paper **$15.95**
208 pages

▪Amoia uses concise studies of eleven representative authors to demonstrate their shared concerns and challenges as writers.

A Race At Bay

New York Times Editorials on "the Indian Problem," 1860–1900

Robert G. Hays
Foreword by **Paul Simon**
ISBN 0-8093-2067-3, cloth **$39.95**
304 pages

▪Four decades of *New York Times* editorials reveal how a combination of insensitivity and compassion forged government policy in the twilight of the great Native American civilizations.

The Irish Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett

Edited and with an Introduction by **Jack Morgan** and **Louis A. Renza**
ISBN 0-8093-2039-8, cloth **$24.95**
192 pages

▪This collection brings Sarah Orne Jewett's fiction into the context of American literary multiculturalism and introduces a refreshing body of work into the corpus of the American short story.

On the Left in America

Memoirs of the Scandinavian-American Labor Movement

Henry Bengston
Translated by **Kermit B. Westerberg**
Edited and with an Introduction by **Michael Brook**
ISBN 0-8093-2079-7, cloth **$39.95**
ISBN 0-8093-2104-3, paper **$19.95**
272 pages

▪Henry Bengston tells his own story as well as that of a minority among Swedish immigrants actively involved in the radical left labor movement during the decades around the turn of the century.

Available at local bookstores or from

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY PRESS

Box 3697 ▪ Carbondale, Illinois ▪ 62902-3697

Phone 800-346-2680 Fax 800-346-2681

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is when we get to the second, more grandiose half of Julius's thesis—his contention that, so far from being an incidental element in his work, Eliot's anti-Semitism was the "inspiration" and animating impulse behind some of his greatest work: "The exploitation of anti-Semitic discourse is an inseparable part of Eliot's greater literary undertaking"—that his lawyer-like skills desert him. Or perhaps, on the contrary, they are too much in evidence. He is so determined to win his case that he excludes or distorts any evidence that does not support it.

Apart from the matter of quantity—a handful of anti-Semitic references, which Julius cites over and over, hardly constitute evidence of a ruling passion—there is the question of just how good, as poetry, the offending lines are. In the interests of his argument, Julius praises them lavishly, for their "charged economy," their "great virtuosity," their "resonance," their "extraordinary compression"; he calls them "triumphs of form." This seems an excessive tribute.

There is also the question of the poems in which the lines occur, which, by almost any standards, are not among the greatest that Eliot wrote. (It seems worth noting that there was a highly anti-Semitic passage in *The Waste Land* that Ezra Pound—hardly the world's leading philo-Semite—excised, presumably for purely aesthetic reasons:

> Full fathom five your Bleistein lies
> Under the flatfish and the squids
> Graves' Disease in a dead jew's eyes!
> When the crabs have eat the lids.
> Lower than the wharf rats dive . . . .
>
> See the lips unfold unfold
> From the teeth, gold in gold . . .

Finally, and most important, there is the question of how specifically anti-Semitism as such was Eliot's "muse" and "inspiration," as Julius claims. Julius's tactic, when there is an anti-Semitic line in a poem suffused with loathing and disgust, is to ascribe its entire tone to its anti-Semitism. Thus, when he comes to dissect the line "Rachel *née* Rabinovitch / Tears at the grapes with murderous paws" from "Sweeney among the Nightingales," he not only catalogues, at interminable length, its relationship to various established anti-Semitic stereotypes (standard practice in this book, which links Eliot's portrayals of Jews to the writing of every other anti-Semite who ever lived) but implies that the whole poem hinges on that couplet.

Yet there is little to choose between Rachel and "The person in the Spanish cape" who

> Tries to sit on Sweeney's knees
>
> Slips and pulls the table cloth
> Overturns a coffee-cup
> Reorganised upon the floor
> She yawns and draws a stocking up . . .

This misogynist's nightmare and Rachel "are suspect, thought to be in league," and it seems merely an added unpleasant detail—though, of course, one that would occur only to an anti-Semite—that the second of the "nightingales" (that is, whores) is Jewish. In fact, everyone in the poem is presented as equally loathsome, including the title character, "Apeneck Sweeney," who "spreads his knees / Letting his arms hang down to laugh" (Sweeney being a recognizably Irish name, Eliot is drawing on anti-Irish as well as anti-Semitic stereotypes here).

It well may be, as Julius remarks, that Eliot, like other anti-Semites before him, is associating Jews with gross animal sensuality, but it seems to be the sensuality that arouses his abhorrence, not the Jews themselves. Certainly Sweeney's sexuality is at least as repellent. And while this may sound like a quibble, it undercuts Julius's argument: if it is loathing of sexuality, rather than loathing of Jews, that is the animating impulse, and the Jews are adduced in service of that loathing, then the anti-Semitism is not after all central to the poem. "Sweeney Erect," quoted earlier, has no anti-Semitic references but is redolent of the same disgust, just as the Gentile figures in "Gerontion" ("Mr. Silvero, / With caressing hands . . . Who walked all night in the next room") are hardly less vile than the "jew." Even in "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar," the portrait of the vulgar Jew is used in service of an idea other than "mere" anti-Semitism; Eliot's real theme is the decline of civilization (Burbank being another symbol of this).

If Julius had analyzed these poems for their distaste for humanity, rather than for their distaste for Jews alone, he might have gotten on to something far more interesting. But he would also have had to be more critical of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eliot than he seems willing to be. In a sense, the final argument he puts forth—that it is possible for great poetry to be anti-Semitic and for anti-Semitism to fuel great poetry—boils down to the old saw of art for art's sake, and the limitations of that position are precisely the limitations of these poems. They are, after all, Eliot's version of symbolism, as has been noted a thousand times, and like other symbolist works they are possessed of a peculiar sterility. Eliot has merely extended the dead end of this sort of poetry, without really regenerating it.

Julius might have asked what exactly is so wonderful about the "allusiveness" that is always praised when these works are discussed. Is it, in fact, such a great virtue in and of itself? One needn't believe that great poetry is necessarily redemptive, or that it must broaden our imaginative sympathies, to feel that it ought to arouse in the reader something more than a frisson of admiration for its erudition or its elegant technique; at the very least, it should have more energy than this, whether it be the energy of passion or the energy of wit. At a time when literary culture, when civilization itself, was seen to be in danger of annihilation, perhaps allusiveness was so highly regarded because it established a link with the unreclaimable past (and it could be argued that civilization has been so well and truly annihilated by now that allusiveness no longer serves any function at all). But even so, in *The Waste Land*—or in *Ulysses*, that other great landmark of modernism—the allusions take on a different kind of life precisely because they are charged with the yearning and pain and terror of the work as a whole; they are less jewel-like and more emotionally resonant.

Finally, Julius might have dared to question just why, in his lifetime, Eliot was so widely regarded as a secular saint. Even in his later, religious poetry, with its constant themes of sin and penitence, he is always much more concerned with his own feelings of guilt than with the suffering of those he has harmed; "imaginative sympathy," whether broad or narrow, was not his strong point. In fact, his treatment of the people who loved and needed him most is notable for a chilling lack of sympathy. Apart from his first, mad, wife, whom he abandoned and had institutionalized without ever visiting her or answering her letters, there was the crippled friend with whom he lived for ten years, whom he abruptly deserted, without warning, when he re-married; there was also his childhood sweetheart, whom he "strung along," in the vulgar parlance, for nearly thirty years, allowing her to believe that he would marry her when his first wife died, but then he ruthlessly dropped her. Those who expressed shock when these facts were brought out into the open by Eliot's biographers after his death should surely have found some clues in the poetry: how could it have come as a surprise to anyone that Eliot was a cold man?

Cynthia Ozick, in a fine recent essay on Eliot, both confesses to being one of his most ardent admirers and regrets the way in which his devotion to high art is no longer a possibility. It seems to me that one can regret the loss of high art without necessarily missing Eliot as a prevailing figure—that one can mourn the fact that great, ambitious poetry is no longer being written without mourning the decline of Eliot's cultural authority. One can, in short, regret the loss of Eliot as a symbol, but it is what he symbolized that one should mourn (a fact Ozick herself acknowledges) rather than what he was. What he was is perhaps only now being sorted out, and if Julius's book is a spur to this larger task, even if many of his arguments seem suspect in themselves, perhaps we should be grateful to him, nevertheless.

The Aesthetics of Myopia

MISTS OF REGRET: CULTURE AND SENSIBILITY IN CLASSIC FRENCH FILM. *By Dudley Andrew. Princeton University Press. Paper, $24.95.*

Reviewed by ROBIN BATES

The poetic realist films of the late 1930s are indelibly marked on the French mind. The famous shot from Marcel Carné's *Quai des Brumes* (1938)—of Jean Gabin and Michele Morgan staring hopelessly out of a rain-stained window in a run-down tavern—seemed to capture the fatalism of the age. As the hopes associated with the Popular Front crashed and burned and as fascism relentlessly

✪ ROBIN BATES is Associate Professor of English at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

asserted itself, France turned to the movies, looking for a bittersweet solace. For three glorious years, from 1936 to 1939, a French film industry that had been floundering suddenly developed an aesthetic that whispered to viewers about their private anxieties and regrets, captivating general audiences and discriminating critics alike.

Mists of Regret, one of the most sensitive and intricate studies of French poetic realism to date, examines the sources of the aesthetic as it attempts to account for poetic realism's power over audiences. In the 1930s the camera "descended into the streets" (Carné's phrase) to follow the lives of marginal men who wandered in the shadows, propelled by obscure longings before being dropped (as often as not) by a destiny-driven bullet. In the gritty back streets of Marseilles, Le Havre, and Paris, viewers experienced a shock of recognition. And yet, even while poetic realism appeared to be a cinema of commonplace exterior objects, it cloaked everything in a poetic "atmosphere" that promised intimacy and authentic relation. As Andrew describes it, poetic realism invited its audiences deep into the screen, offering them an experience of "unprecedented density." In the detailed texture of the films, they could "physically experience on the screen what they privately worr[ied] over in everyday life."

Mists of Regret is a combination of cultural history and close filmic analysis, with periodic excursions into critical theory. There are chapters on France's literary and cinematic heritage, on the realist and the poetic traditions, and on the culture of the 1930s, especially music halls, theater, and popular fiction. There is a chapter on sound's aesthetic and economic impact and one on the relationship of film and the Popular Front. The different chapters are cross-referenced as Andrew creates what anthropologists call a thick description, showing how the different areas—the cultural, the technological, the political, the social, the economic, and the aesthetic—all intersect. Throughout the study he notes the responses that the films received and the conversations they generated.

Looking back to the early days of French cinema, Andrew sees poetic realism as the high point of a "tradition of the intimate that spans the continuum of French film history." While American cinema has concentrated on entertainment, German cinema on the psychological mode, and Russian cinema on the epic vision, France, Andrew says, is the source of a cinema that is simultaneously lyrical and realist. Surrealism and impressionism were two of poetic realism's most influential predecessors. From surrealism it derives its emphasis on detailed sets and the lives of common individuals, as well as the belief that "something extraordinary" lay beneath the surface.

Yet the poetic realists also drew on the melodrama of the 1920s avant-garde impressionists. Poetic realism owes to the impressionists, not the surrealists, its emphasis on delicacy of sentiment, on the "aesthetics of suffering rather than confrontation," and on poetic logic over poetic spontaneity.

While surrealism and impressionism produced a few enduring works, such as Buñuel's *Andalusian Dog* (1928) and Kirsanov's *Ménilmontant* (1926), the elitism of the first and the excessive refinement of the second kept them from finding a wide audience. Andrew sees two developments changing the situation. On the one hand, sound technology was so expensive that cinema had to reach a broader base. It could no longer be the plaything of dilettantes. On the other, the rise of Popular Front politics created the impetus to bring a *cinéma de qualité* to the general public. The result was an aesthetic that achieved both critical success and mass appeal.

For Andrew, the power of poetic realism lay in its sense of immediacy and limited perspective. The world on the screen appeared deeply mysterious, not only to the hero, but to the narrative point of view and to the spectator as well. Gabin, the reigning star of poetic realism, always seems blind to the social circumstances governing his plight, and Andrew says that the poetic style got audiences to share that blindness. The cinema was figural, not literal, appealing to the passions rather than to action. It thrived on the drive to identify.

Andrew is not unaware of the problems of such a vision, which he calls an aesthetic of myopia, and he concedes that poetic realism often appealed shamelessly to the emotions and played on self-pity. He even hints that there is a fascist dimension in the surrender to pure feeling. At this point, it is worth examining Andrew's relationship to poetic realism. He seems to hold it up as a magical moment in cinema, and yet he questions the films it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

produced. For instance, he sees the film he considers poetic realism's masterpiece, Jean Renoir's *Bête humaine* (1938), as marred by a blind, humorless tenacity, and he appears to prefer the wide-ranging and humanistic perspectives of Renoir's non-poetic realist films, *Grand Illusion* (1937) and *Rules of the Game* (1939). Andrew even casts doubt on the aesthetic as a whole when, in his discussion of Jean Vigo's marvelous film *L'Atalante* (1934), he suggests that poetic realism never managed to achieve the magical character of ordinary people the way that Vigo did. Although he does not say so outright, one gets the sense that Andrew is disappointed in the poetic realist films, interesting though they are. In the final analysis, they don't live up to their billing.

This may explain why, in the last two chapters, Andrew emphasizes poetic realism's enduring reputation. It is the myth itself that enchants him more than the individual films. Poetic realism enters the realm of myth, he says, with France's most revered film, Carné's *Children of Paradise* (1944). Appearing during the Occupation, when many of the poetic realist films had been banned as demoralizing, *Children of Paradise* is for Andrew "the apotheosis and the betrayal of poetic realism." Andrew draws on Schiller's distinction between naive and sentimental poetry to make his point. Whereas the works of poetic realism, he argues, were meant "to provide an experience so immediate that the spectator never thought to admire the expression that touched him or her to the bone," *Children of Paradise* "was calculated to evoke admiration through a display of artistry." Carné's film took poetic realist melodrama and, through self-conscious artistry, turned it into allegory.

And so it has functioned ever since, as the myth of poetic realism has grown to play various symbolic roles in French culture. After the war, France sought to salvage its pride by citing the films that had swept international film festivals in the 1930s, pretending that it hadn't banned them as defeatist in 1939 and 1940. In the early 1960s, the French New Wave film makers held them up as models, contrasting their apparent genuineness with the polished studio productions of the 1950s. Mitterand's victory in 1981 recalled the Popular Front and the films associated with it. The myth is evidently powerful as well for Andrew, who writes

Smart Jews
The Construction of the Image of Jewish Superior Intelligence
SANDER L. GILMAN
"Gilman's insights are dazzling, his arguments rigorous."
—*Kirkus Reviews*
$35 cloth

Seeing the Insane
SANDER L. GILMAN
A richly detailed cultural history of madness and art in the Western world.
$30 paper

now in paper
A Lie and a Libel
The History of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*
BINJAMIN W. SEGEL
Translated and edited by Richard S. Levy
$10 paper/$22.50 cloth

A Pluralistic Universe
WILLIAM JAMES
Introduction by Henry S. Levinson
$15 paper

At bookstores. University of Nebraska Press
800-755-1105 · www.unl.edu/UP/home.htm

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the lure of a cinema that bridged the gap between high art and popular culture. Invoking wasteland imagery, he tells of the myth revitalizing hope in an art form that has become jaded and spiritually stricken. "You always dream of another cinema," he writes, "one gathering like a summer storm, approaching majestically, and raining on your upturned face. Such a cinema would moisten your parched imagination and root your life in life itself." Contrasting poetic realism with Hollywood's productions, Andrew writes, "American cinema has always invested in maximum shock effects, in bursts of song, violence, eros, or language. Poetic realism diffuses such energy in a warm mist of style that mutes the sound and brightness of every effect, even as it washes over us and seeps down to the roots of feeling."

Andrew is lyrical when he opens himself to the myth, but his other position, disassembling the myth, calls forth a different kind of prose. *Mists of Regret* often verges on the encyclopedic, piling up detail after detail and making connection after connection. Andrew is comprehensive as he sums up the debates in the field and as he answers the theoretical challenges that he anticipates. This has the unfortunate effect of clogging the book and burying some penetrating and well-crafted observations, of which the following is a characteristic example: "Naturalism sits rather comfortably within the secure circle of middlebrow entertainment, even as it provocatively raises the banner of the scandalous. Like the cinema in general, it advertises more risks than it takes."

Throughout this closely reasoned, passionate, eloquent, if sometimes congested book, one senses an uneasy relationship between the film historian and the film lover, as though the first sees poetic realism from the outside in and the second from the inside out. Andrew has entered into the aesthetic so fully that it would be surprising if there were not some confusion of perspective. As an academic sophisticate, Andrew is suspicious of poetic realism's claims of immediacy and authenticity. But as an explorer of the poetic realist mind, Andrew can assume the role of the naif and embrace the myth. Perhaps one could argue that his hardheaded analysis gives him permission for passionate engagement, or that scholarly criticism must surrender to art's myths to remain vital. Perhaps Andrew's longing for immersion in a compelling poetic atmosphere is an antidote to, or a refuge from, or a protest against, the ironic scraping of postmodernist thought and its attendant academic projects. Whatever the case, the complexity of his response is testimony to poetic realism's remarkable and problematic vision, a vision that at one point in history held viewers in thrall and that continues to excercise the French imagination.

The Bad Old Days

WE SCHOLARS: CHANGING THE CULTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY. *By David Damrosch. Harvard University Press. $32.50. Paper, $15.95.*

Reviewed by ROBERT B. HEILMAN

The author, who professes literature at Columbia, is annoyed by various procedures and styles of the Metropolitan Ivy, and in venting his distresses, he assumes that the local flaws, as he sees them, are of national extent. He is distressed by attitudes and procedures that in his view belong to some earlier period and should be replaced. All evils, as he sees them, center in the dominance of the Ph.D. programs that, as we all know and are constantly told, came in a century or so ago, an export from a romantic Germany contemplating, with awe, its glorious origins in the medieval period. In this shaping of academic life, as Damrosch sees it, the "scholar" exists in, and furthers, a culture of "alienation and aggression." Alienation means a separatist, relatively unsocial professional life, in which the individual triumphs as best he may, especially by molding look-alike followers through the Ph.D. programs, not giving a damn for anything else. Thus he is into aggression against other fields and other studies and their practitioners; he doesn't help teach general studies or help in important general education. This

✪ ROBERT B. HEILMAN is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Washington at Seattle. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Ways of the World: Comedy and Society* and, most recently, *The Southern Connection.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"tenured scholar" (Damrosch sees him rather than the "tenured radical" as the source of most educational troubles) looks out for only personal interests (and perhaps departmental interests that are of concern to his operations), and the rest of the world, academic and non-academic, pays the price. Damrosch recounts most of these errors in a style that, though often molded by indignation, is mainly good-natured enough. He strives to persuade and, I assume, to avoid hostility by habitual irritated name-calling.

How valid Damrosch's gripes are depends on whether the flaws he sees at Columbia are general throughout the profession. I can only offer some experiences that are of a different order. In a long academic life, I have known only one case in which a professor visibly neglected students to pursue his own scholarly interests. Likewise, I have known only one case in which a colleague visibly assembled a corps of true believers who felt that from him they held the only right beliefs in literary matters otherwise overrun with error. In general, the professors I have known represented "fields." They dealt professionally with students; they did not recruit followers and converts, but did their best by students interested in their fields. They knew not only their own work, but also work of colleagues in the profession that the students should know. I know of virtually no cases of "alienation and aggression," even though a professor may be, as some wit said, "an oddball who always votes Democratic but thinks Republican"—that is, believes that whatever goodies he gets, in response to offers or threats, by way of reduced teaching loads or enlarged salary, "trickle down into the quality of the university" and thus reveal the just working of a competitive society.

Although Damrosch finds a good many villains in the system, perhaps the central one is the established senior faculty member (the tenured professor made still more secure by achievements and hence reputation) whose chief aim is to render himself immortal by shaping graduate students into likenesses of himself ("disciples"). After a good many years in the profession (as graduate student at Harvard and as staff member at several good-sized state universities much given to conferring advanced degrees), I haven't found as much of this self-perpetuating villainy as

UNFINISHED PEOPLE
Eastern European Jews Encounter America

RUTH GAY

"A touching and funny evocation of the once tumultuous world of immigrant Jews in New York in which so many native sons and daughters grew up. The interweaving of piety and 'American' newness is marvelous in its detail and some of it still makes me gulp, though I was there. This is history as day-to-day living—irrecoverable and unforgotten."
— Alfred Kazin

"A vivid and informed account."
— *Publishers Weekly*

Visit our Web site at http://www.wwnorton.com
NORTON *Independent publishers since 1923*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Damrosch has. I have seen far fewer self-perpetuating faculty tyrants forcing helpless students into imitations or clones of the master than students selecting dissertation topics in pursuit of their own "interests" (of which Damrosch speaks reverently as though they were or should be the sole determinants of study) and then shopping among the faculty to find "directors" to approve these pursuits and provide at least nominal guidance for carrying them out. Students do usually find dissertation directors. Their problem is less likely to be the be-like-me director than the technical incompetence of the director in the area in which the student chooses to work. Some faculty members would rather be recognized as directors of numerous dissertations than as relaxed and capable guides in set fields. The vice, if any, is inattentiveness to the disciple rather than dictatorial production of another look-alike maintaining the "triumph of specialization."

Well, as my last several pages show, "our information differs," as I once heard Lionel Trilling (of whom Damrosch normally approves) say, in a public meeting, to some backrow dissident.

What Damrosch envisages, however, as an improvement on a power-play kind of department and a subject organization of knowledge is a more genial and cooperative relationship among academic individuals, departments, and fields. We have to forget about power, numbers, status, and so on, and move into a genial, non-competitive discovery, reworking, and re-organization of fields. This could sound a little like Cardinal Newman redivivus—except that Newman actually believed that there was an intellectual substance, not subject to annual alteration, that institutions might communicate. Damrosch is all for getting that substance brought up-to-date (as I'll spell out presently). If, as I read Damrosch, we continue to write and think as individuals, we will be only competitors engaged in self-aggrandizing power plays, striving toward higher professional altitudes where we will be bosses, dictators keeping everyone else humble and in line. This is the dictatorship of existent areas of knowledge interesting only to specialists (Beowulfians, Jonsonians, etc.) who use them as bases in a continuing academic war for the securing of and the holding on to of influence and power.

This view of academic life is rather a setback to those of us who fancied, at least once upon a time, that we were trying to spread a little bit of enlightenment in a world open to efforts to diminish its own darkness. But whatever that old order did turns out to be indefensible. French and German for the Ph.D.? Why bother? Everything is available in English now. It seems not to occur to Damrosch that even a little French and German might aid our movement into a larger, more understanding, less destructive competitive world. And if Damrosch rejoices in the disappearance of Latin, it is, for some of us, rather cheery news that when a professor in a state university offered a new course in "Latin as an Aid to English," he found far more takers than anyone expected.

In seeking a more tolerant, less competitive world, Damrosch pushes for more "collaborative learning." A longtime friend, a high-school teacher, assures me that this has been a cliché of school reformers for quite some years now; apparently it leads more to "collaboration" than to "learning." In the schools they are all for "change" too. Apparently any change is a good thing. Damrosch's subtitle is *Changing the Culture of the University.* It is taken for granted—this is really a standard cliché of American thought—that all change will be beneficial. It can seem so if you define the present in sufficiently derogatory terms—that is, if you can really see all university processes as determined by *gauleiterisch* professors for whom all educational decisions are power plays designed to guarantee the continuation of the professional advantages.

Not that Damrosch does not make some valid points against professorial self-interest as an influence on institutional educational policy, but on the whole he seems to take professional malfeasance as basic in the situation he wants to change. So we all must get together in friendly, productive chats about policy, requirements, etc. "Collaboration and the Exchange of Ideas" is a heading on page 197. In pushing this ideal, he does a good job of ridiculing "Conferences and Collections" as poor imitations of true "collaboration and exchange," indeed as parodies of collaborative work, but he sees the Internet and E-mail as contributing to advantageous collaborative study. Among other happy results, such beneficial actions will lead to greater concern for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the "interests" of students, which may not coincide with the curricular offerings of departments in which the students seek graduate degrees (surely it would be hard to find a modern institution that did not offer curricular satisfactions for every kind of student interest). Still, student "interests" are a highly dubious guide to curricular arrangements.

Damrosch posits "intellectual sociability" as a professional reality that we should not discourage. It leads, I take it, to cooperative thought and not simply to friendly discussion among scholars in diverse fields or operations. At its best it will produce joint-authored works such as famous "Wellek and Warren" (Damrosch does not mention the fairly famous "Brooks and Warren" collaborations; such works, of course, cannot be willed into being, but are the outcomes of biographical, geographical, and historical accidents). Damrosch avers that "such examples of collaborative work . . . can loosen the hold of the myth that original ideas come into the mind alone and in no other way." Truly original ideas are pretty rare, and they are normally come upon by individuals in advanced research areas rather than in course offerings. Maybe they can be generated by discussion and "intellectual sociability," but they can hardly be assembled by committee.

His commitment to collaboration means that Damrosch is all for "team teaching," but, since its modes are never defined, the reader does not know whether he means a constant classroom presence of alien points of view by argumentative proponents, or alternating instruction of a course by faculty who think differently. At best it seems to be an experimental practice rather than a basic instructional procedure. And if team teaching becomes mandatory, the number of hours of work required for the staffing of all classes will leave no time for scholarly, critical, or creative writing.

I am reminded of a remark once made to me by the chairman of the English Department in a small college: "When a candidate says to me, 'I consider myself primarily a teacher,' I know he's no good." This was from a department chairman in a college hardly known for printed output in scholarly and critical journals.

Damrosch is also committed to interdisciplinary studies, which anyway seem almost standard fare in a day when increasing knowledge

For critically acclaimed mysteries and suspense...It's

ALLEN A. KNOLL, PUBLISHERS

books for intelligent people who read for fun

The Snatch
The Missing Link
The Mountain Massacres
The Con
Nobody Roots for Goliath
The Unlucky Seven (Spring '97)

Order at your favorite bookstore

Signed first editions available from the publisher, call (800) 777-7623

For a free booklet of excerpts of *Nobody Roots for Goliath*, please call (800) 777-7623

Russian-American Dialogue on Cultural Relations, 1776–1914

EDITED BY NORMAN E. SAUL AND RICHARD D. MCKINZIE

This third volume in the Russian-American Dialogues series provides English translations of the best Russian scholarship on cultural relations. Five issues are discussed: the contributions that each country made to the cultural life of the other; the correspondence and interactions between scientists, writers, and others from the two nations; the development of public perceptions and how these changed over time; the "American focus" in Russian periodicals during the nineteenth century; and the significant roles of Russians and the Russian presence in American history. The Russian articles on each of these subjects are followed by comments from American historians. **280 pages, $42.50**

University of Missouri Press

2910 LeMone Blvd., Columbia, MO 65201

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is constantly re-ordering the traditional disciplinary boundaries. Yet hardly a day passes without our mailboxes receiving announcements of interdepartmental colloquia on "medieval issues," "The Renaissance," "neoclassicism," "romanticism," and so on. Are we not already pretty close to where Damrosch wants us to go? Damrosch ought to have a clear picture of where the profession is before recommending where it should go.

Damrosch is strongly opposed (it's not clear why) to the monographic dissertation, and he puts in repeated plugs for a dissertation that is an assemblage of several articles—a practice already in use at various universities. He chides us for not seeing the "value of literature on academia," but his extensive quotations from that "literature" hardly entice one into readership.

A general air of cultivated detachment in *We Scholars* does not completely disguise some of the book's tendencies toward with-it-ness. Damrosch harps on the desirability of more curricular study of film and television; he does not say what studies it should replace, or notice its success in various institutions around the country. He thinks, of course, that there ought to be more study of American literature (and hence less of English). He isn't naïve enough to join in the common abuse of "European white males," but implicitly he is not too far away from it. How far we have come from "the best that has been known and said in the world," risky though it is to quote a Victorian male. Damrosch's tendency toward fashionableness, at least in vocabulary, appears in a statement near the end that for a "hermeneutics of exile" we should substitute a "hermeneutics of community."

A vigorous reformer of education does well to resist certain stylistic errors that many readers will find annoying: "A faculty comprised largely of generalists." *Comprise* means *include,* not *constitute* or *compose.* Twice he uses *parameters* in the populist sense of "boundaries." Literally the word means a "side measure," a "yardstick," rather different from *perimeter.* Twice, too, he uses the phrase "work in synergy together." But *synergy* means "working together," so we are left with an almost comic tautology. And I must admit to having some difficulty with his *taedium curriculum vitae. Taedium curriculi vitae? Taediosum curriculum vitae?* Oh well.

A Thousand and Two Nights

THE MANUSCRIPT FOUND IN SARAGOSSA. *By Jan Potocki. Translated by Ian Maclean. Viking. $27.95.*

Reviewed by JONATHAN ELUKIN

When Jan Potocki shot himself in 1815—whether out of boredom or madness is unclear—the learned Polish nobleman ended a lifetime of travel, erudition, war, and writing. Educated in Switzerland, he mastered eight languages, traveled ceaselessly throughout the Near East and Europe, fought against Barbary pirates as a Knight of Malta, and moved in Enlightenment circles in pre-Revolutionary Paris. For all that, he was no dilettante. He studied the languages and culture of the Caucasus, and he pioneered the ethnographic study of the Slavic and Caucasian peoples. By 1805 he was so prominent that Czar Alexander chose him to lead an embassy to Peking, though the group was turned back in Mongolia. His service for reactionary monarchs did not prevent him from keeping close contacts with Jacobin groups in Paris. The one constant element throughout Potocki's life and travels was his writing—letters, scholarly tracts, stories, and one large mystifying work of fiction: *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa.*

Written in pieces over many years, and published only partially in his lifetime, the full text was translated from French into Polish in 1847. The original French has been lost, and a recent edition published in Paris is a retranslation from the Polish. It is that version on which this new English translation is based. The disjointed nature of the work and its publication has hindered systematic study of the *Manuscript* by scholars writing in English. Robert Irwin briefly discusses Potocki in *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (Penguin Press, 1994) and sets the work in the context of early modern fantasy literature influenced by *The Thousand and One Nights.* He has a useful footnote on other treatments of Potocki in English and French. This English edition should stimulate further interest in Potocki and his unique novel.

The story begins at Saragossa with the dis-

JONATHAN ELUKIN, a historian and critic, frequently reviews books for THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

covery of a manuscript by a French officer in 1809. The manuscript is written in Spanish, and the officer asks one of his Spanish captors to translate it for him into French, which he then transcribes. The manuscript purports to record the adventures of Alphonse van Worden, an officer of the Walloon Guards, as he travels through the forbidding Sierra Morena mountains in 1739. Van Worden recounts how he is led through a series of encounters with seductive Muslim women, brother and sister kabbalists, the Wandering Jew, a mysterious hermit, a gypsy chief, and others. Each character and encounter has a sinister quality, with demons, secret wealth, hidden groups of Jews and Muslims, and magical transformations haunting each page.

Each character is invited to tell his or her story, and often the action in one tale influences the action in another or the main narrative. Unfortunately, the characters are a bit cartoonish, and even main figures such as Van Worden are not fully realized. To complicate matters, characters within each tale will often add stories of their own. Keeping track of the narratives soon becomes hopeless, as Potocki himself no doubt knew. After listening to one of the gypsy chief's colorful but convoluted stories, Van Worden's companion, Velàsquez the mathematician, complains: "Really, this story alarms me. All the gypsy's stories begin in a simple enough way and you think you can already predict the end. But things turn out quite differently. The first story engenders the second, from which a third is born, and so on, like periodic fractions resulting from certain divisions which can be indefinitely prolonged. In mathematics there are several ways of bringing certain progressions to a conclusion, whereas in this case an inextricable confusion is the only result I can obtain from all the gypsy has related." He is chastized by Rebecca, the kabbalist, that in "spite of that you derive great pleasure from listening to them." And she is right, too.

Potocki seems to have poured every bit of knowledge that he acquired in his travels or reading into this book. It is filled with that odd combination of profound erudition and fantasy that made up much of eighteenth-century scholarship. Potocki's characters tell us about dueling, Islamic sects, the history of ancient Palestine, kabbala, brigands, Spanish aristocrats, the Inquisition, demons, lan-

REFLECTIONS FROM DUKE

KEEPING AN OPEN DOOR
Passages in a University Presidency
Keith Brodie and Leslie Banner

"This is a marvelous and evocative memoir which I recommend highly to all who wish to understand more about the university presidency and the evolving challenges facing American higher education."—Harold T. Shapiro, President, Princeton University

200 pages, 16 photographs, cloth $22.95

THE THIRD AND ONLY WAY
Reflections on Staying Alive
Helen Bevington

"One of the most enjoyable books I've read in a long time. Its patience with the reader, tone of cultivation and passion, breadth of learning and experience, and occasional breathtaking turns of phrase remind me of Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa* and some of Annie Dillard's nonfiction."—William Harmon, author of *The Top 500 Poems*

224 pages, cloth $21.95

Duke University Press Box 90660 Durham, NC 27708-0660 http://www.duke.edu/web/dupress

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

guages, and a myriad of other topics. The nature of the work should make one chary of trying to find an overarching theme. In his brief introduction, Ian Maclean rightly presents a range of often contradictory themes that can be found in different parts of the *Manuscript*, including pleas for tolerance, anarchy, rationalism, honor, self-indulgence, eroticism, mysticism, and pragmatism.

Still, Potocki's work has particular meaning for a modern reader in its attempt to grapple with the problem of uncertain or changing identities. Potocki himself was so cosmopolitan that it is difficult to place him in one national, religious, or political category. His own country, Poland, disappeared during his lifetime. For many of his readers, the Enlightenment had gone far to undermine the certainties of Christian belief. In the world of the Sierra Morena, a Christian was only one possible identity in a myriad of other human categories all of which had long and respected pedigrees. As Mamoun, a wise Jew in the story told by the gypsy chief, warns: "You find yourself here on lands whose deep places are hidden from profane eyes; lands in which everyone has a secret to keep. . . . In the valley which stretches out before your eyes you will meet bogus gypsies, some of whom are Muslim, others Christian, yet others who confess no religion." (It is also interesting to note Potocki's rather sympathetic portrayal of Jewish characters, while Judaism itself is described as slowly decaying over the years. Jews are often dangerous figures who possess mystical knowledge, but violent anti-Jewish rhetoric is largely absent from the various tales.)

The denouement of the book reveals that the identities of many of the actors, including Van Worden's seductive Muslim cousins, Rebecca the Jewess, the hermit, and others had been masquerades as part of a plot to reunite the Christian and Muslim branches of the mysterious Gomelez family. The borders of identity are crossed by Van Worden himself when he discovers he has fathered children by his Muslim cousins, thus preserving the line of the Islamic Gomelez. His son is a Muslim prince while the daughter converts to Christianity and becomes Van Worden's heir.

While this rather contrived resolution offers some consolation that the chasms separating human beings can be bridged, what keeps the book alive for a modern reader is the compelling panorama of Potocki's world of shifting and uncertain identities. The characters themselves may not live in our minds as do those from truly great novels, but we feel great sympathy for their plight as we, too, live through constant change in religious, ethnic, and national identities. It helps to know that while Potocki may have lost faith in life, Van Worden survived his crucible in the dangerous mountains of the Sierra Morena. Such a journey is surely worth a thousand stories.

Ante-room to Hell

THE RENAISSANCE OF JEWISH CULTURE IN WEIMAR GERMANY. *By Michael Brenner. Yale University Press. $30.*

Reviewed by RUTH GAY

No phase of German history has been more closely studied than the fourteen years of the Weimar Republic, as we turn the events over and over seeking clues to the catastrophe that followed it. In the past year alone, two major works on Weimar politics—by Heinrich Winkler and Hans Mommsen, respectively—have appeared in Germany, while in the United States, Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., the dean of historians of the Nazi period, has just published a suspenseful study of the fateful last thirty days before Hitler was named chancellor of the young republic. Although these are the most recent investigations, a huge literature on Weimar has emerged in the postwar years, for Weimar has remained in our imaginations as the tantalizing ante-room to hell. Not least of the catastrophes was the disappearance of an ancient Jewish civilization. While Germany—in fact two Germanies—rose from the ashes of Hitler's war, the Jewish community, with its history of sixteen hundred years on German soil, was totally destroyed.

Whether they disappeared by emigration, deportation, or murder, of the half-million Jews counted in Germany when Hitler came to power, only some five thousand managed to live through the war within the country,

RUTH GAY is the author of *The Jews of Germany: A Historical Portrait* and *Unfinished People: Eastern European Jews Encounter America.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and all under the most perilous circumstances. They were soon joined by other Jews: survivors of the concentration camps; refugees from the East Bloc countries; later, Jews in flight from Iran and Iraq; some few returnees; and a handful of converts. These disparate, sometimes even hostile, groups made up a new community but one that was in no way a successor to the old Jewish world. One cannot read of those last years of the German Jews, therefore, without remembering the fate that awaited them and the culture that they had built.

In *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, Michael Brenner has written a brilliant, original book about the Jews in the Weimar Republic. Unlike many earlier works that emphasized the Jewish "contribution" to Germany, Brenner brings us inside the community at a time of enormous ferment. He shows us the issues, questions, and problems that agitated the Weimar Jews: their dissatisfaction with the price of integration and their attempt to recover their past, the new developments in their cultural life, and the many subgroups that existed under the rather gross rubric "German Jews." He shows us how the very period that was to be their last was also a moment in which the community had gathered new strength and was reshaping itself in a new mode of self-discovery. One of the main merits of Brenner's study is the way he is able to draw disparate strands of Jewish life together, showing relationships between aspects often considered separately—such as Gershom Scholem's study of Jewish mysticism and Franz Rosenzweig's founding of schools for Jewish education. He has also integrated varied and little-known materials into his study, from internal communal politics to the post-war flowering of Yiddish and Hebrew publications. In doing so, he has given us a truer and richer picture than we have had of the last years of the German Jews.

Despite their long history on German soil, German Jews had only sixty-two years, from the proclamation of the Empire in 1871 to Hitler's rise to power in 1933, in which they enjoyed full legal rights as German citizens. For more than a century before this, in the patchwork of states, dukedoms, and principalities that made up what was later called Germany, they had seen rights granted and withdrawn in an arbitrary and maddening cat-and-mouse game. In response, during the nineteenth century, some 120,000 Jews had in fact given up on the hope of achieving civil rights in their homeland and had emigrated to America.

Ironically, Germany was the country where discussion about the rights of Jews had started earliest and finished last. In the German lands the discussion begins, as it does elsewhere in Europe, with the ideas of the Enlightenment and the revolutionary claim that Jews have the *right* to equal standing before the law. Moses Mendelssohn, as the emblematic figure of the Jew who encompassed both the parochial Jewish and the larger German worlds, was the inspiration for two of the major works that set forth the argument for equality. He was the model for the hero of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's enduring play *Nathan the Wise* and was the friend of Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, whose essay "On the Improvement of the Civil Status of the Jews" showed the self-defeating nature of anti-Jewish discrimination.

Yet even without civil rights, in the eighteenth century Jews in Germany began to enter the larger world in which they lived. They began to speak German; they adopted Ger-

UNIVERSITY PRESS AUDIOBOOKS

Mind & Reality

Selections from The MIT Press

Daniel C. Dennett • John R. Searle
Paul M. Churchland • Hilary Putnam

Read by Julian Lopez-Morillas

2 Cassettes • $17.95 • Shipping $3.50 • Visa/MC/check

free catalog: Chomsky, Foucault . . . **800-282-1225**

Audio Scholar POB 1456 Mendocino CA 95460

SEEKING PROFESSIONAL LECTURERS FOR WORLD WIDE CRUISE VACATIONS!

Anthropology, Authors, Curators, Current Affairs, Ecology, History, Humanities, Literature, Oceanography, Philosophy, Sociology, Destination & Culture Specialists.

Forward curriculum vitae to:
CTI Recruiting & Placement Inc.
Attn: Lecturer Division - AS
1535 S.E. 17th St., Suite #206
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33316
Tel.: (954) 728-9975

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man culture even without the conversion that Heinrich Heine called the "entry ticket to Western civilization." In the new industrial world, their traditional occupations of trade and finance moved them from the margins of society to the center; and feeling a new confidence in the mid-nineteenth century, they began to build magnificent synagogues wherever they lived. No longer hiding their places of worship in back alleys or camouflaging their façades in drab stucco, they built in the grand "Moorish" style that was the rage for synagogues across Europe and even in the United States. But self-affirmation was followed by cultural drift, and by the time of the Weimar Republic, the synagogues were no longer real centers of community, for most Jews described themselves as "three-day Jews," attending only on the High Holy Days.

As Michael Brenner points out, World War I became a watershed in which the cycle of Jewish forgetting and remembering suddenly took a new turn. For many of the German Jewish soldiers sent East, their encounter with Eastern Jewry was also their first meeting with "real Jews." And what had become a strange world was suddenly a world that they desperately wanted to bring into their own lives. Fortunately, there were a few activists who were able to translate these longings into reality. Brenner has a long and fascinating section in his book on the work of Franz Rosenzweig and his colleagues, in which he concentrates as much on the institutional aspects of Rosenzweig's Lehrhaus (house of learning) as on his philosophical beliefs. Opened in 1920 in Frankfurt, it closed after six years, largely because of Rosenzweig's incapacitating illness. But he shows how in its brief but influential life, owing to Rosenzweig's exaltation of the unlettered student, the Lehrhaus brought back into the fold exactly those young German Jews who had felt shut out by their ignorance. Rosenzweig's life, in his alienation from his Jewish past and as a man who had trembled on the brink of conversion to Christianity and had returned to Judaism, was in itself a paradigm for many of the students at his school.

Brenner's description of Jewish cultural achievements, of the recovery of the Jewish past in the Weimar period, makes it clear that at the very moment that the German Jews were cut off by the Nazis, they were on their way to a new synthesis—this time, however, with the East European Jews and with the world of biblical and talmudic learning that had been abandoned by them for so long. This synthesis was a new swing of the pendulum. Some, under the influence of the Rosenzweig school, for example, adopted an orthodoxy that had not been seen in their families for generations. But what was more striking was the explosion of learning.

In absorbing detail, Brenner describes the founding of Jewish museums as well as the opening of a new era of Jewish scholarship as great works of Jewish learning were made available to a German-speaking audience. Among the best-sellers were a translation of the Talmud, which sold ten thousand copies, and a translation of Simon Dubnow's *World History of the Jewish People,* a ten-volume work that sold one hundred thousand copies. Other major titles of the period included Martin Buber's *Hasidic Tales,* Gershom Scholem's elucidations of Jewish mysticism, Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber's new translation into German of the Scriptures, the publication of both a Jewish *Lexikon* in four volumes for lay readers, and an *Encyclopaedia* with a more scholarly purpose.

Brenner quotes the *Jüdische Rundschau,* the Zionist newspaper, as voicing a widely shared opinion on the publication of the *Lexikon.* "In recent years," wrote the editors, "there has been a sharp increase in the demand for Jewish knowledge. After a generation that became ever more remote from Judaism, we see now a generation that wants to regain access to the knowledge which had been lost by the development[s] of the last century." In 1934, the editors of the encyclopedia published the tenth volume, which had reached the letter *L.* Among the contributors had been Ismar Elbogen, Gershom Scholem, the musicologist Alfred Einstein, and the essayist Walter Benjamin. "The remaining volumes," Brenner tells us dryly, "never appeared as a result of the political developments in Germany."

The developments in Jewish scholarship in Weimar Germany, however, had their parallel in the arts. Jewish writers, artists, and musicians more and more sought out Jewish themes and Jewish subjects for their work. The intensity of this feeling is perhaps best demonstrated in a famous anecdote about Else Lasker-Schüler. When asked by the Hebrew poet Uri Zvi Greenberg whether she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wanted her *Hebrew Ballads* translated into Hebrew, "she replied angrily," reports Brenner, "'What? But I am writing in Hebrew.'" Nonetheless, a century of secularism had left its mark, as Brenner points out in a telling observation, since Jews tended to listen to the newly composed or newly rediscovered liturgical music in concert halls rather than in the synagogue.

What is perhaps too little known is the way Germany, and Berlin in particular, became a center for Jewish publishing in both Hebrew and Yiddish during the 1920s. Brenner reconstructs this period in comprehensive detail, showing how Berlin proved a magnet for Jews in flight from Eastern Europe. The poet Hayim Nahman Bialik explained the attraction: "Many of the bearers of Hebrew culture [from the East] found their way to Berlin, the same Berlin which was the birthplace of the Haskalah and the seat of *Hokhmat Yisa'el* [the wisdom of Israel] in its Western dress. At this great and decisive hour, relatives who had been separated by force happened onto the same inn." Thus even an organization so rooted in the East as the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) was founded in Berlin in 1925. Hebrew publishing also had a new home in Germany, notably with Bialik's publishing house and journal of the same name, *Devir*. This scholarly periodical drew upon the talents of scholars of both Eastern and German origins, while the future Nobel Prize winner Shmuel Yosef Agnon, who spent twelve years in Germany under the patronage of Salman Schocken, a department-store magnate, published his first works in Berlin with the newly founded Soncino Society press. And in 1922 Simon Dubnow also chose to move from the turmoil of Petrograd to a tranquil Berlin suburb, where he wrote his two-volume history of Hasidism.

Scholarship and the arts, museums, schools, and libraries were only the external manifestations, as Brenner shows, of a search for personal authenticity. That this was cut short is perhaps most vividly demonstrated in the date of the opening of the Jewish Museum in Berlin—January 24, 1933, just six days before Hitler was named chancellor. As one closes Michael Brenner's book, one cannot escape the feeling that, although he has recorded an amazing "renaissance," he has written an ultimately tragic chronicle of the Jewishness of the last German Jews.

You won't find a better reflection of yourself than your children.

Good Values Make Great Kids

The Catholic Communication Campaign

It keeps more than memories alive.

American Heart Association℠
Fighting Heart Disease and Stroke

AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION MEMORIALS & TRIBUTES℠

1-800-AHA-USA1

This space provided as a public service.
©1994, American Heart Association

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Reader Replies

Soft-Hearted Hannah

In the Summer 1996 issue, on p. 458, Paul Roazen in his review "Soft-Hearted Hannah" says of the Germans: "the most highly educated country in Central Europe willingly chose to vote [Hitler] into office." That is incorrect history. On January 30, 1933, Hitler was APPOINTED Chancellor by President Hindenburg at the head of a conservative government in which there were only three Nazis. In the not very fair Reichstag election of March 1933, the Nazis alone only got some 45 percent of the vote, but it is dangerous to let a wolf of Hitler's ability in the door.

BERNARD SINSHEIMER
Boulogne, France

PAUL ROAZEN replies: Liberal democrats have had a hard time accepting the fact that by comparative political standards Germany in 1933 wanted Hitler. Of course in any parliamentary system no one votes directly for the future chancellor or prime minister. But 45 percent is an immense proportion of the electorate, more than many American Presidents have received, and a larger mandate than most parliamentary winners elsewhere have earned. It might seem comforting to think of Hitler as having been "appointed," but in the long run it is more dangerous for friends of popular government to dodge the enthusiasm for Nazism.

Rosina: A Memoir

Jeaneane Dowis Lipman's bittersweet portrait of Rosina Lhevinne (THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Summer 1996) enkindled my own memories of a woman I came to know only at the very end of her long life. That Mrs. Lhevinne could exert a profound influence on her students is without question; my own experience, though, saw none of the coldness that I read about now.

The Rosina Lhevinne I knew was a challenging teacher, but a tremendously supportive one, a magisterial presence but always warm and caring. The interest she took in me was uplifting and gratifying, and although I worked with her for only a relatively brief time, the experience remains an inspiring one. It is entirely possible that she had grown mellow by the time I got to know her, but her will and capacity for making friends was very much in evidence. I was a student of Mrs. Lhevinne's for the last two years that she taught at Juilliard. By that time her advanced years (she was ninety-four) precluded an active teaching schedule, so I didn't have regular lessons with her. (How often I wished that I could have caught her somewhat earlier, say at the tender age of eighty!) For all intents and purposes I was a student of Martin Canin, one of her "assistants" at the time. Mr. Canin was—and is—an eminently qualified teacher, and since I had weekly lessons with him, I had no need for another teacher; my lessons with Mrs. Lhevinne were something of a bonus. When I was a teenager I had studied with Bomar Cramer, who in turn had studied with the Lhevinnes. Mr. Cramer revered Mrs. Lhevinne tremendously and spoke of her often, so my curiosity had been growing for some time. A few weeks into the school year, Mr. Canin informed me that he was going to be out of town for a while and would have to miss my next lesson. He suggested that this might be a good time to arrange a lesson with Mrs. Lhevinne. To that first encounter I brought more than the usual trepidation (she was a living legend, after all) and sure enough, Mrs. Lhevinne began the lesson with a lecture on the use of the pedal. To say the least I was somewhat puzzled by this—I hadn't yet played a note for her, so she didn't know how well or how badly I used the pedal. The initial effect of this introduction was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

disorienting, but when it became clear that she was simply sharing her awe at the seemingly endless possibilities of subtlety and refinement that could be achieved just with the pedal, I was able to relax. The message that hard work lay ahead was very clear, but I was soon to find that rather than make me aware of how inadequate my playing was at present, she would manage to keep my sights on how much better it could be in the future. I must have done the right things with regard to the pedal, as we eventually moved on to the Schubert Sonata I had prepared for the lesson.

One of the aspects I enjoyed most about my lessons with Mrs. Lhevinne was the fact that they were not the usual hour-long events that lessons tend to be. I never noticed how the time was apportioned between work and socializing, although she always heard all the music I brought to my lessons, but my appointments always took the better part of the afternoon. I believe that any able-bodied person who crossed her threshold at that time of her life was in danger of being pressed into service, to take Mrs. Lhevinne for a walk, something she dearly loved but was incapable of doing without assistance. She used these times to reminisce, and I loved every minute. She talked about her near-contemporaries from her early years in Russia (Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, and her husband Josef), old and new friends she had seen recently (Arthur Rubinstein and Vladimir Ashkenazy), and especially her former students, who obviously brought so much joy to her life. On rare occasions, though, they also brought pain. I remember her agonizing over what must have been an especially difficult divorce between two former students who were very close to her—her maternal instinct seemed to me especially strong whenever she spoke of her students. She also used these times to give extra-musical advice, and I owe my obsession with reading the newspaper in part to Mrs. Lhevinne's urging me to keep up with world events.

The last time I saw Mrs. Lhevinne was not an entirely happy event for me. I was preparing a program for some upcoming concerts and competitions, and I was especially keen on getting her advice on two works from that program. This time, though, she seemed tired, she seemed like a woman of ninety-five years (and she didn't ask to be taken for a walk). I played for her, yet she hardly said anything. I was terribly disappointed with the lesson and also sad to see her without the spirit I had seen before. As I was putting on my coat to leave, though, she wished me luck with a recital that was coming up soon, and added, "You *do* have an encore prepared, don't you?" I replied that I was planning to play a work by Liadov, an obscure piece, but one I was sure she would have heard. To my surprise, though, she didn't know this work, and she insisted that I play it for her. After I finished she smiled at last, told me how very much she enjoyed hearing this music, and even thanked me for introducing her to this work. I was very touched by this, and in the reminiscing I have done reading and responding to Mrs. Lipman's remembrance, I have realized how very grateful I am to have such an endearing last memory.

WILLIAM BLACK
Associate Professor of Piano
University of Cincinnati

Nicotine, An Autobiography

Apparently the intensity of physical and mental reaction to quitting the cigarette habit (nicotine addiction withdrawal, if you prefer a more dramatic description) varies greatly among individuals. My experience with the effort, after twenty-five years of smoking and deeply inhaling two to three packs each day, was drastically milder than the dramatization written by Kai Maristed for your Summer 1996 edition ("Nicotine, An Autobiography").

After a few aborted efforts at "trying to quit," I finally became serious about the fact that I intended to stop. After a few days, weeks at the most, of a certain fogginess of attention, so that an exercise of will was required to accomplish detailed tasks, it was done. During a considerably longer period of time I felt a very strong desire for a cigarette when faced with situations that "called for a smoke" that I hadn't already fought through. As each situation was conquered, the instances became more rare. After a year or so, those instances no longer arose. I had quit.

It wasn't an easy experience, and, at times, it was damned unpleasant, but it was so totally different from the experience of Ms. Maristed that I wonder if she has not overly dramatized in order to present a more colorful essay.

I believe it is important that those considering the possibility of quitting the habit understand that Ms. Maristed's experience is not necessarily what is to be expected. If I had read such an essay at the time that I began to quit smoking, I may very well have concluded that it wouldn't be worth the effort.

PHIL SEXTON
Panama City Beach, Florida

KAI MARISTED replies: Surely readers will join me in congratulating Mr. Sexton on his wonderfully easy escape from the smoking habit. Unfor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tunately, despite over four hundred thousand *annual* attributable deaths (according to the Center for Disease Control), fifty million Americans continue to use nicotine. Does this vast population—including athletes, service men and women, health professionals and other presumably strong-minded individuals—merely share a chronic inability to "get serious"?

People do differ, hugely, in their response to addiction withdrawal and other disruptive stimuli. Since my essay's publication, numerous readers have confirmed and welcomed its depiction of certain stages of quitting and healing. However, that doesn't incline me to question the veracity of Mr. Sexton's personal account.

Trivial Pursuits

Aristides asserts in "Trivial Pursuits" (THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Autumn 1996) that the notion of sportsmanship—the spirit of fair play—is "all but dead" in the world of sports "except in the game of golf." A further exception should be noted—the sport of lawn bowling. Founded in the British Isles centuries ago, this game spread throughout the world and is currently enjoyed by devotees in clubs throughout the United States. Competition is keen within clubs, with other clubs, and in regional, national, and international matches, conducted in accord with classical standards of sportsmanship.

It may be pure coincidence that golf and lawn bowling are alike in their adherence to high standards of sportsmanship, but it is noteworthy that both a golfer on the putting green and a bowler must exercise similar eye-hand coordination to direct a sphere across a fast green towards a small target—in one case a small hole and the other a round object roughly the size of a golf ball.

Lawn bowlers uphold a long sporting tradition. It is reported that Sir Francis Drake, upon being informed of the approach of the Spanish Armada, insisted on completing the game of bowls, in which he was then engaged, before embarking to meet the more aggressive foe. Whether this be fact or fancy, the tradition of fair play has been retained over the years; we, both men and woman, who compete in this sport, hope that the tradition continues undiminished.

WILLARD NORBERG
San Francisco, California

Clerihews for the Clerisy III

I loved Roger du Béarn's "Clerihews for the Clerisy III" in the Summer 1996 issue. And while we're at it,

Sir Thomas Malory
Lurked in the gallery,
Longing to flee,
But unfortunately he did not hold the
card that would get him out of jail free.

FELICIA ACKERMAN
Department of Philosophy
Brown University

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation (Act of August 12, 1970; Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code)

1. Title, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR; 2. Date of Filing, October 25, 1996; 3. Frequency, Quarterly—March, June, September, December; 4. Office of Publication, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

6. Names and Addresses of Publisher, Editor: Publisher, Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009; Editor, Joseph Epstein, 522 Church Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201.

7. Owner: Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009; No Stockholders.

8. Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None.

9. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal Income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months.

10. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. Copies Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total No. Copies Printed (Net Press Run)	28,772	28,815
B. Paid Circulation		
1. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors and Counter Sales	2,837	4,575
2. Mail Subscriptions	22,173	22,137
C. Total Paid Circulation	25,010	26,712
D. Free Distribution by Mail Carrier or Other Means Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free Copies	1,315	1,314
E. Total Distribution (Sum of C and D)	26,325	28,026
F. Copies Not Distributed		
1. Office Use, Left-Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing	896	789
2. Returns From News Agent	1,551	- 0 - to date
G. Total (Sum of E&F—should equal net press run shown in A)	28,772	28,815
H. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	95 %	95%

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
Douglas W. Foard

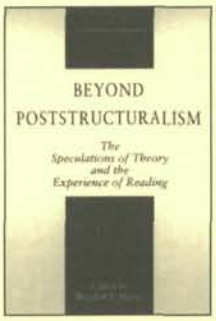
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PENN STATE PRESS

Beyond Poststructuralism

The Speculations of Theory and the Experience of Literature

EDITED BY WENDELL V. HARRIS



Contributors are Bernard Bergonzi, John Holloway, Wendell V. Harris, A. D. Nuttall, Raymond Tallis, John Searle, Richard Levin, Robert Scholes, James Battersby, David Bromwich, Quentin Kraft, Michael Fischer, Charles Altieri, Christopher Clausen, Gayle Greene, André Lefevere, Daniel R. Schwarz, Virgil Nemoianu, and Martha Nussbaum.

460 pages $19.95 paper

Creating Literature Out of Life

The Making of Four Masterpieces

DORIS ALEXANDER

"An exhaustive reading of primary sources, and of a great deal of secondary literature on the authors and their times, has enabled Alexander to uncover many of the sources for the memories that Mann, Stevenson, FitzGerald, and Tolstoy refashioned in their works." —Robert E. Proctor III, Connecticut College

262 pages 6 illustrations $39.50

Available in bookstores, or from
PENN STATE PRESS
820 North University Drive
University Park, PA 16802
Orders: **1-800-326-9180**

The Rise of Sinclair Lewis, 1920-1930

JAMES M. HUTCHISSON

"Hutchisson evidences a satisfyingly smooth and convincing ability to synthesize his own extensive readings of and research on Lewis, drawing conclusions that have the ring of sense and strong subject knowledge about them." —*Washington Times*

288 pages 32 illustrations
$29.50

Penn State Series in the History of the Book

Of Making Many Books

A Hundred Years of Reading, Writing, and Publishing

ROGER BURLINGAME

Out of print for many years, this history of Charles Scribner's Sons is now reissued, with an introduction by Charles Scribner III, on the 150th anniversary of the founding of the house.

384 pages 1 illustration $19.95 paper
Reprints in Book History in the Penn State Series in the History of the Book

Shaw's People

Victoria to Churchill

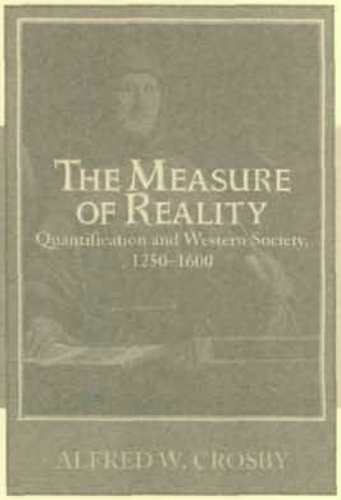
STANLEY WEINTRAUB

Stanley Weintraub explores the relationships between Shaw and twelve of his contemporaries, including Queen Victoria, Oscar Wilde, H. L. Mencken, James Joyce, and Winston Churchill. "*Shaw's People* testifies both to its author's erudition and the fact that there remains a wealth of unmined material in the Shavian quarry." —*Times Literary Supplement*

264 pages 17 illustrations $29.50

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE BEST FROM CAMBRIDGE



The Measure of Reality

Quantification and Western Society, 1250-1600

Alfred W. Crosby

"The Measure of Reality *has all the intellectual scope, vivid detail, imaginative interpretation and delicious wit that I expected from Crosby's earlier books. Here Crosby argues that Western Europeans were better imperialists than any humans before them in part because, from the thirteenth century onward, they thought about reality in quantitative terms—and did so more consistently than any other peoples. There is an important lesson here for our day.*"
– Joel E. Cohen, author of
How Many People Can the Earth Support?

55427-6 Hardback $24.95

The Damascus Affair

"Ritual Murder," Politics, and the Jews in 1840

Jonathan Frankel

Many Jews in Damascus were charged with ritual murder and tortured after the disappearance of an Italian monk and his servant in 1840. This book assesses the "Damascus affair" as a factor in the European and Jewish politics of the time as well as a chapter in Jewish history and historiography.

48246-1 Hardback $64.95
48396-4 Paperback $19.95

Military Innovation in the Interwar Period

Williamson Murray *and*
Allan R. Millett, *Editors*

This study of major military innovations in the 1920s and 1930s explores differences in innovating exploitation by the seven major military powers. This volume of comparative essays investigates how and why innovation occurred or did not occur, and explains much of the strategic and operative performance of the Axis and Allies in World War II.

Contributors: *Williamson Murray, Allan R. Millett, Richard R. Muller, Geoffrey Till, Holger H. Herwig, Alan Beyerchen, Barry Watts*

55241-9 Hardback $64.95

Disraeli

A Brief Life

Paul Smith

This concise study of Disraeli, aimed at the general reader as much as at the student, stands in contrast to the many full-length studies which continue to appear. It focuses on the substantial reassessment of Disraeli's career and personality which is currently taking place. Particular reference is made to the role played in Disraeli's conception of life and politics by his Jewishness and his romanticism.

38150-9 Hardback $39.95

Available in bookstores or from

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211
Call toll-free 800-872-7423
MasterCard/VISA accepted. Prices subject to change.
Web site: http://www.cup.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED